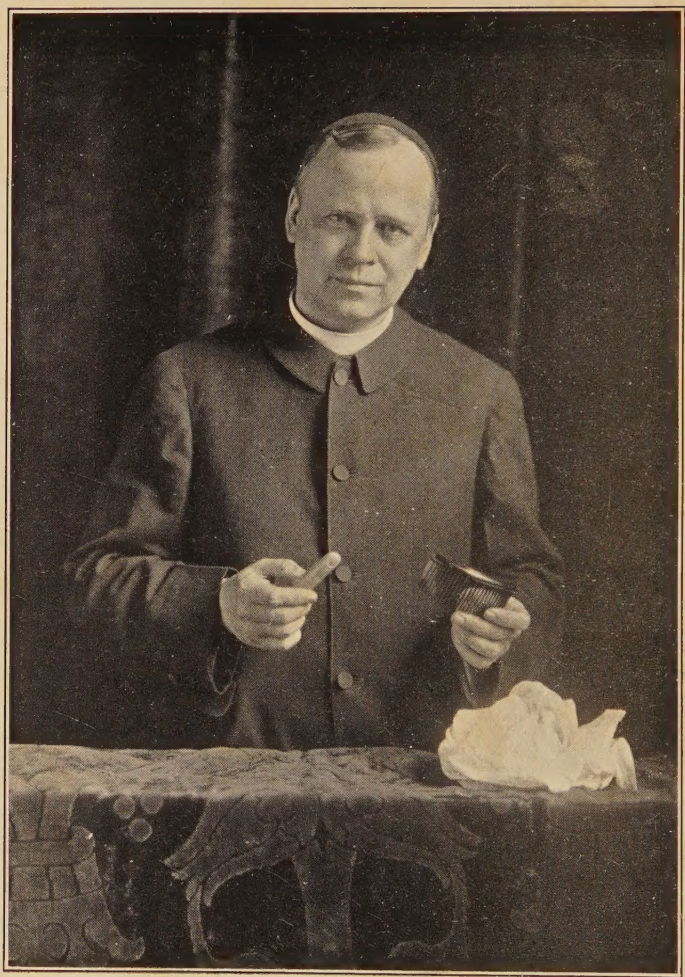


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FATHER HEREDIA EXHIBITS THE "TOOLS OF THE TRADE"

# Spiritism and Common Sense

BY

C. M. de Heredia, S.J.

"The imprudent who run after the  
spirits, lose their own spirit."

J. Bois (*The Modern Miracle*)

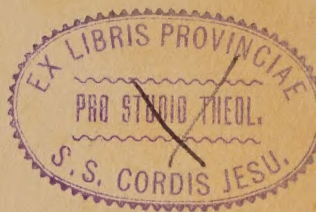
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OFFICE OF THE SEC'Y OF STATE  
of His Holiness

The Vatican, March 27, 1923.

MOST REVEREND FATHER:

The Holy Father has deemed agreeable and acceptable the homage of your book, "Spiritism and Common Sense," which you have presented to him, and His Holiness has given me the honored and pleasing task of making manifest his heartfelt recognition.

Touched by your devoted and courteous thoughtfulness, His Holiness has likewise found the book pleasing and interesting, seeing with real pleasure that you have known how to place at the service of public culture and serious knowledge, the large and mature fruits of your studies, your intelligence, and your experience.

In order, therefore, to give you a proof of his Sovereign pleasure, and at the same time of his benevolence, the august Pontiff sends you from his heart the Apostolic Benediction.

Taking advantage of the present opportunity, it is my pleasure to manifest to you my sentiments of special and sincere esteem.

Of Your Most Reverend Paternity,

Most affectionately in the Lord

(Signed) S. CARDINAL GASPARRI.

Very Reverend C. M. De Heredia, S.J.,

College of the Holy Cross,

Worcester, Mass. (U. S. A.)



# Letter From The Apostolic Delegate

---

Apostolic Delegation, United States of America,  
1811 Biltmore Street, Washington, D. C.

Nov. 28, 1920.

REVEREND FATHER:

Having assisted at the two conferences which your reverence so ably gave in this city, I am glad to express my congratulations. I am delighted also and grateful, not only for the pleasure given me and the rest of the spectators but above all for the good that such conferences will doubtless produce.

Let us always open more and more the eyes of the public—especially Catholics—to dangers of Spiritism; making them at the same time realize that many phenomena attributed to a mysterious and occult cause are reducible to clever trickery.

Accept, then, the renewed expression of my sentiment of admiration. Blessing you in the Lord, I have the pleasure to sign myself,

Your Reverence's servant in Christ,

GIOVANNI BONZANO,

Arcivescovo di Melitene, Delegato Apostolico.

R. F. C. M. de Heredia, S.J.,

Holy Cross College, Worcester, Mass.





## Publishers' Foreword

The author of this book, Rev. C. M. de Heredia, S.J., is so interesting a personality to meet, so fascinating when he, a Jesuit of dignity, is at play with his "ghosts" and ectoplasmic "spirits" that we give here, for the reader's benefit, a short account and description of him as taken from an interview, "The Secret of Spirit Trickery," printed in the *Boston Sunday Post* of March 14, 1920.

"Father Heredia is a rather short, stocky man, of Mexican birth, with a little forward thrust of his head and two of the most amazing blue eyes I ever saw. One moment they are looking at you, dreamily, quietly, almost sleepily. And the next they sharpen to a point and gaze through your skull at the wall behind you. The effect was most discomfoting to skeptical me.

"For Father Heredia is a master of magic and mystification, a student in his youth of the great Herrmann, an artist supreme of the arts of the medium and clairvoyant. Yet, as he told me, his

## PUBLISHERS' FOREWORD

delving into the mystery of the shadowy world of the unseen is only a hobby. Primarily he is a student—a student of the modern languages and the classics, of philosophy and science. His father was a very rich Mexican, who had built a private theater for him and his brothers. When any celebrity came to Mexico, the father arranged to have him come and give a private performance in the boys' theater. Once Herrmann, the famous magician, was in Mexico, and performed before the boys in their theater. The father was so impressed at the magician's skill that he arranged to have him teach the boys his art. With this instruction by Herrmann began Father Heredia's interest in magic. All through his life he has followed the various tricks of the great magicians, many of whom have been personal acquaintances of his.

“When spiritism became popular, he perceived that most mediums were but unadept magicians, and devoted his spare time to disclosing many of their so-called mysterious powers.”

P. J. Kenedy & Sons

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## Prologue

This book makes no claim to be a scientific work. That its full significance may be understood by the average reader, I have avoided as far as possible all technical expressions and references.

The book presupposes some little knowledge of Spiritism, but not to such an extent as to prevent the ordinary man from understanding the argument and conclusion. It seeks to define just what psychical phenomena are, and then discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the various theories offered to explain these phenomena. It is a brief treatise. It does not pretend to be exhaustive. If Our Lord wills that it be profitable to some, I shall be satisfied.

*Feci quod potui, faciant majora potentes.*

I did what I could, let the powerful do more.

C. M. DE HEREDIA, S.J.

June 22, 1922.

HOLY CROSS COLLEGE,  
Worcester, Mass.



# Spiritism and Common Sense

## I

“THE WORLD WANTS TO BE DECEIVED.”

—(OLD PROVERB.)

MAN likes to be mystified. If the mystification is well done and appears to have a foundation in fact he is not only entertained but completely deceived. His natural credulousness makes his deception easy. A wave of the wand and—presto! the rabbit appears from the hat. But not only the feats of magicians fool him. Magic is a sort of business nowadays and man is inclined to be more wary of its marvels than he is of more mystical hoaxes. Tell him of some occult rite, of some secret organization that deals with demons, of some oriental cult that is privy to the secrets of the nether world, of some strange society that meets the spirits of the dead in unknown caverns or far-away citadels—and he swallows all. Not only does he delight in these fabrications, as the child in the fairy story, but like the child, he believes.

## 2 SPIRITISM AND COMMON SENSE

This credulity of people is no exaggeration. History bears witness to its truth. Its pages, early and late, tell the story of secret formulae, strange rituals, alchemy, witchcraft, black magic, satanic societies, and the like, some few of which may have had origin in fact, but most of which were merely the inventions of ingenious, shrewd, imaginative men and women, to mystify their followers. And those who were duped have not been only the illiterate and simple; the erudite and trained and so-called intellectuals are in that band as well.

Mystification is particularly effective when Satan and his minions are introduced into the play. There is an example taken, not from the days of the Assyrian mysteries or Jewish cabalism or the Faustian years of the Christian centuries, but from the eighties and nineties of the last century in France, that illustrates my point well. It is the hoax of the notorious "Leo Taxil."

A young Frenchman, Gabriel Jogand, born in 1854 at Marseilles, came before the public during the seventies as a vile and violent critic of the Catholic Church. Because of his vituperative abuse of religion and individuals he paid many penalties of fine and imprisonment. In 1881 he became a Freemason, but left the order in the same year. He tried various ingenious methods



of keeping himself in funds and bringing himself before the public. For several years he had ordinary success. Suddenly, in 1885, he professed his conversion to the Catholic Church—in which, by the way, he had been born and which he had deserted early—and after a renunciation of former ideas and associates, and an expression of deep contrition, he was received into the Church. Almost immediately after his conversion he began his “revelations” of Freemasonry. In book and pamphlet he spread abroad the most blood-curdling “revelations” of the Masonic organization. Two years later he went to Rome where Pope Leo XIII received him and blessed him for his labors.

He wrote under the pen name of his early days, “Leo Taxil” and under numerous other pseudonyms, and had many collaborators. Church dignitaries and influential Catholic laymen gave him their support. His popularity spread like that of the author of a best seller. His “revelations” were of a startling character. He declared Freemasons to be worshippers of Satan, and for about twelve years he wrote in his rapid, gripping style, of the relations Freemasons held with the devil, of their shocking rites and fiendish sacrifices in honor of the King of Hell. Very cleverly, he gave an historic background to his “revelations,” accentuating many points as from his own experi-

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ence. He invented characters, such as the notorious "Diana Vaughan," a woman who as a priestess of Freemasonry, saw the devils themselves and professed to have been married to one and carried off by him to his kingdom. His imagination and that of his assistants wandered over the globe, placed mystic temples in Calcutta, Charleston, Naples, Washington, and other places; described ceremonies with Satan's crew in a chapel in Singapore, in the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, in labyrinths supposed to have been discovered in the Rock of Gibraltar; named the devils; drew detailed pictures of them; and in short, perpetrated one of the greatest hoaxes of the century. He identified Satanism and Freemasonry. The Masons protested, but in vain. Leo Taxil was invited to the anti-Masonic Congress at Trent in 1896, spoke there, and was welcomed among the high ecclesiastics.

No evidence was offered. Taxil's pastry was readily swallowed, and the clever cook became a hero.

For twelve years Taxil and his collaborators enjoyed themselves. Then the spell was broken. And it was broken, not by the sudden sense of the audience, but by the action of one of the wizards. C. Hacks, a German whose pen-name was Dr. Bataille, one of Taxil's assistants, the author of the

immense work, "The Devil in the Nineteenth Century," profusely illustrated with drawings that in their day terrorized but now amuse, suddenly proclaimed his complete contempt for the Catholic Church, and a little later declared the whole work a gigantic swindle.

Leo Taxil, however, was not so eager to give up the source of entertainment and remuneration which had stood him in good stead for a dozen years. He went on brazenly for a few months and then in a characteristically theatrical manner made his real revelation. He announced that, at a meeting in the Geographical Society's rooms in Paris, he would produce the "Diana Vaughan" whom we have mentioned. A crowd attended. Taxil mounted the platform alone. He then very impudently announced that the "revelations" so widely scattered by the press were but a fiction, a romantic fabrication, or, to use his own word, a "mystification." And he thanked the Catholic press and bishops for the help they had given him.

At first those who had been following his works would not believe him. They accused him of renouncing the truth. But time gradually proved that his "revelations" were but the mystification he asserted. Yet, even today there are those who quote Leo Taxil.

I give this example in detail to show how easy

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it is to fool people, learned and unlearned. And I give it at the beginning of these short talks on Spiritism that the reader may keep in mind hereafter this brilliant, gigantic fraud. I do not say here, and I shall not say hereafter, that the so-called spiritistic phenomena are *all* a hoax. I merely wish to make the point that it is very easy for mortals, even in great numbers, to be fooled. Taxil has taught Catholics a lesson, and that lesson we must not forget in our study of Spiritism. We must be on our guard. We must be very careful not to take the word of non-Catholics, however pretentious is the scientific authority that pronounces it, when that word touches on matters that have to do with faith and endeavors to declare what we should or should not believe. When we are at war we are prone to blame the enemy's intrigue and the machinations of his agents for almost every unusual mishap. The spiritual struggle for the salvation of our souls is a warfare. We should take care that we, too, under such conditions, do not blame the devil for everything.

Satan is one of our enemies. But also arrayed against us are our own passions and weaknesses, and the insidiousness of a deceitful world. The devil is our principal enemy, the master mind that tries with all the resources at his command to lead us to perdition. In his fight against man he is the

moral agent of disaster, and sometimes the physical agent, as in the cases of obsession and possession. He is the "ape of God," to use St. Augustine's words, and he mimics in his plans the Providence of God. As God uses secondary causes to direct our steps heavenward, and seldom performs miracles, so the devil uses secondary causes, and rarely exercises his direct power. Hence we must be careful not to confuse the devil's *moral* influence in our daily lives with his *physical* interference. Possession of our bodies is not necessary for him to induce us to sin.

Yet some writers, with the very honest desire of making us avoid every semblance of evil, portray the devil as if he were working constantly against us in a *physical* and *immediate* way. Anecdotes and parables are an excellent instructive force. But they are but anecdotes and parables, and not facts. The devil can and may interfere directly and physically. But a very careful investigation must be made before such interference is proclaimed as his. Because certain phenomena are inexplicable it does not follow that Satan is personally to blame.

With these few thoughts premised, we can now proceed to a more intimate study of our subject.

## II

### THE ORIGIN OF SPIRITISM

THE belief that the souls of the dead can communicate in a *sensible* way with souls still on earth is almost as old as man. According to the teachings of the Catholic Church it is certain that such communication can take place and has taken place. But that this communication goes on promiscuously day in and day out; that the souls of the dead are hovering about the earth tipping tables, rapping on walls, playing tambourines, moving hands to write, materializing, superintending the messages of the ouija board, levitating heavy objects; that these souls come *not spontaneously* but at *the bidding of* earthly agents; that these souls are repeatedly imparting information the great mass of which is trite, inapposite, nonsensical, and often blasphemous; that they dictate instructions often contradictory, nearly always vague and confused; that these souls, furthermore, are working for agents whose motives are usually mercenary, and sometimes even vile . . .



that such and similar activities have anything to do with genuine communication with the dead is not merely doubtful but altogether unwarranted by fact, as I shall try to show in the following pages.

Spiritism, scientifically speaking, is the *hypothesis* that through the mediumship of persons of a peculiar and special sensitiveness, the dead can communicate with us. Spiritism as a religion is the system of beliefs based on this *hypothesis*.

Spiritism *as a religion* first made its appearance in the middle of the last century. It began with the demonstrations of the famous Fox sisters. The mother of these girls, whose history I shall sketch later, heard "mysterious rappings" in her home. The fame of her discovery spread quickly throughout the neighborhood.

"I asked the noises to rap my children's ages successively," said Mrs. Fox, telling of the first experience. "Instantly, each one of my children's ages was given correctly, pausing between them sufficiently long to individualize them until the seventh, at which a longer pause was made, and then three more emphatic raps were given, corresponding to the age of the little child that died, which was my youngest child. I then asked, 'Is this a human being that answers my questions so correctly?' There was no rap. I asked: 'Is it a spirit? If so,

make two raps,' which were instantly given as soon as the request was made. . . ."

The mother's narrative goes on into more detail. But that was the beginning. Neighbors were called in. It was decided that the Fox children had unusual powers of communication. They were called here and there to give demonstrations. The press took up their work. And the world wildly seized this excellent opportunity to be humbugged.

So much for the beginnings. I am now going to quote to some extent from a book, "The Death Blow to Spiritualism," by Reuben B. Davenport. The book is published with a facsimile of a letter from two of the Fox sisters, signed by them and authorizing Davenport's work and giving him full permission to use the data supplied by them. It is a book of revelations.

"The 'rappings' produced by the 'Fox sisters' are certainly the first of which there is an authentic account. They began in a little rustic cottage at a place called Hydesville, in the town of Arcadia, near Newark, Wayne County, New York. Here John D. Fox and his wife, Margaret, dwelt with their two daughters, Margaret and Catherine. Two other children, Ann Leah and David S., lived elsewhere.

"Margaretta, or Margaret Fox, as she al-

ways signs herself, was born in the year 1840, and Catherine Fox a year and a half later.

“Maggie and Katie Fox were as full of petty devilment as any two children of their age ever were. They delighted to tease their excellent old mother, who, by all who knew her, is described as simple, gentle, and true-hearted. In their antics they would resort to all sorts of ingenious devices, and bedtime witnessed almost invariably the gayest of larks.” (“The Death Blow to Spiritualism,” p. 81 et seq.)

In the year 1847 Mrs. Fox began to hear the mysterious raps. Then the Fox sisters became famous mediums, giving séances in America and Europe—and modern Spiritism was begun. In 1888, Mrs. Margaret Fox Kane, one of the sisters, made the following confession in a New York paper of that year. Herein she blames her older sister, Mrs. Fish, twenty-three years her senior, for having led her into the practice of Spiritism.

“When Spiritualism first began, Kate and I were little children, and this old woman, my other sister, made us her tools. Mother was a silly woman. She was a fanatic. I call her that because she was honest. She believed in these things. Spiritualism started from just nothing. We were but innocent little children. What did we know? . . .” (Ib. p. 36.)

"I knew, of course, then," she says, at a later date, "that every effect produced by us was absolute fraud. Why, I have explored the unknown as far as human will can. I have gone to the dead so that I might get from them some little token. Nothing ever came of it—nothing, nothing." (Ib., p. 37.)

Mrs. Catherine Fox Jencken, the other of the younger sisters, soon after sustained Mrs. Kane in her denunciation.

"Spiritualism is a humbug from beginning to end. It is the greatest humbug of the century . . . Maggie and I started it as very little children, too young, too innocent, to know what we were doing. Our sister Leah was twenty-three years older than either of us. We got started in the way of deception, and being encouraged in it, we went on, of course . . ." (Ib., p. 57.)

On the 21st of October, 1888, Mrs. Margaret Fox Kane first fulfilled her intention of publicly denouncing Spiritism and its attendant trickery. She appeared at the Academy of Music in New York and before a large audience demonstrated the method she had used in producing the strange "rappings."

"I am here tonight," she declared from the platform, "as one of the founders of Spiritualism, to denounce it as an absolute falsehood

from beginning to end, as the flimsiest of superstitions, the most wicked blasphemy known to the world." (Ib., p. 76.)

Here is a part of the account of her demonstration, from the New York *World* on the following morning:

"A plain wooden stool or table, resting upon four short legs, and having the properties of a sounding board, was placed in front of her. Removing her shoe, she placed her right foot upon this table. The entire house became breathlessly still, and was rewarded by a number of short, sharp raps—those mysterious sounds which have for more than forty years frightened and bewildered hundreds of thousands of people in this country and Europe. A committee, consisting of three physicians taken from the audience, then ascended to the stage, and having made an examination of her foot during the progress of the 'rappings,' unhesitatingly agreed that the sounds were made by the action of the first joint of her large toe." (Ib., p. 77.)

Mrs. Kane explained afterwards how she and her sister first began their "rappings" by dropping apples suspended by a string out of their beds and thus producing a dull thud on the floor. When anyone came near they quickly pulled the apples back under cover.



“ . . . we first got the idea of producing with the joints similar sounds to those we had made by dropping apples with a string. From trying it with our fingers we then tried it with our feet, and it did not take long for us to find out that we could easily produce very loud raps by the action of the toe-joints when in contact with any substance which is a good conductor of sound. My sister Katie was the first to discover that we could make such peculiar noises with our toes. We used to practice first with one foot and then the other, and finally we got so we could do it with hardly an effort.” (Ib., p. 90.)

Thus was born the famous cult that has held the stage with varying degrees of popularity for half a century and in these days has attracted the “scientific mind.” Of this mind I shall speak at more length later. For the present I am not questioning whether the Fox sisters developed faculties different from those exercised in the manipulating of toe-joints, or whether mediums today have powers which were not employed in the methods of these sisters. I want to show clearly that Spiritism originated with a fraud, that the phenomena for the explanation of which the *hypothesis* of Spiritism was put forward were produced purely by trickery. I want to bring out that Spiritism, in the case of the Fox sisters,

started with a humbug that would have delighted Leo Taxil. It is an hypothesis not excogitated by the genius of a Newton, but by a frightened mother to explain the very ordinary antics of her children.

### III

#### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE OBSERVER

IT is frequently said: "Spiritism has Science to back it up." Just exactly what that means is very hard to determine. It certainly does not mean that science as represented by its academies and universities has declared the *hypothesis* of Spiritism lifted to the dignity of *fact*. Nor does it mean that a number of men who have the right to be called *scientists* have declared for the same belief. It may mean that *some* men of good standing have, in a genuinely scientific spirit, examined it. Or it may mean that two or three men who rank high in some particular branch of science have declared in favor of the hypothesis. In this last case there is at least something definite. It means, for example, that a well-established chemist and a well-established physicist have investigated spiritistic phenomena and proclaimed Spiritism a very credible hypothesis or pronounced that "there is something in it." Why their authority on chemistry or physics should be transferred to quite a different sphere and considered

authoritative in regard to Spiritism is a little mystifying. Such a conclusion would seem to imply that because a man knows much on one subject he knows much also on another subject. And why this transferred authority should establish that "Spiritism has Science to back it up" is too much for my humble intelligence.

"This is an Age of Science"—to borrow the phrase of the Sunday supplements. The work of science in the past fifty years has been little short of marvelous. Patient, careful work, illuminated at intervals by flashes of brilliant genius, has added enormously to the sum of human knowledge.

Men, however, with little training and less mental equipment have strutted before the populace with stolen prestige and pronounced themselves scientists. Oh, the credulous people again . . .! Admiration became adulation. The crowd, as it always does, "slopped over"—to use a vulgar but effective phrase, and accepted these professors with large letters after their names as authorities not only in the work to which they had devoted their ordinary abilities, but *in all things on the earth and above and underneath it*. Especially have they dogmatized on religion. The crowd at the end of the last century listened to them with such earnestness that it still sedulously believes

them, even though the hypotheses on which they built their teachings have gone up in smoke.

To these pseudo-scientists—you can find their ideas yet among you, on the lecture platform, in newspapers, books and pamphlets—I will give no more attention. Let me mention only the late Professor Hyslop of Columbia University, who, while far above them in mental power, was a follower of their methods. Though a professor of logic and ethics, he was caught up in the same boastful spirit that encouraged careless thought and downright inaccuracy. In his book on Spiritism, "Contact with the Other World," he tells, for example, how "Copernican astronomy established the falsity of one of the fundamental tenets of the Church" (p. 462). He goes on to show how the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo were preludes to "the final overthrow of ecclesiastical domination" (p. 463). And then, in his usual apodictic manner, he declares ". . . this new astronomy gave impetus to the curiosity which led to the theory of Columbus that land should be found on the opposite side of the earth," and ". . . the discovery of the new world was only another result of the initial conception of Copernicus" (p. 463). Tremendous reasoning, is it not? Shattering and overwhelming . . . when



one remembers that in 1492 Copernicus was a boy of 19 years and Galileo was not born.

In other words, Galileo, who was to come some seventy years later (Galileo was born in 1564) and Copernicus, who was a toddling infant when Columbus conceived his idea and a boy when he put it into action (Copernicus was born in 1473) were to overthrow "ecclesiastical domination" with their "new astronomy" and furnish Columbus with the theory and impetus that led him to discover the new world. Such reasoning from a professor of logic might amuse, did one not see so obviously the motive behind the falsification. And yet, Professor Hyslop, for a large number of people, has been for years the last word on Spiritism.

I shall now leave pretenders and pseudo-scientists. Hereafter when I speak of *scientists*, I refer to those men of deep knowledge, gained and verified by exact observation and correct thinking, whose work and authority in at least one subject entitle them to consideration. Sir William Crookes, for example, is an excellent authority in chemistry. When he speaks of chemistry all do well to listen. It takes a man of the calibre of Berthelot to call either his reasoning or his facts into question. But when he speaks on moral or religious matters the situation is different. His

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carefulness and superb work in chemistry demand that we give him our attention, but by no means our credence. I have already mentioned one reason why this is so: because a man knows much about one subject and its correlated branches, it in no way follows that he knows as much about a subject that is altogether different. His knowledge of the former subject is more apt to be a hindrance than a help. It is true that he brings to his new studies one excellent preparation: his mastery of the scientific method of exact observation and careful thinking. And yet, paradoxical though it sounds, when it comes to the investigation of spiritistic phenomena, it is this preparation and, indeed, his whole training, that allows him to be fooled, and to be fooled much more easily than alert men of ordinary common sense. For here a factor insignificant in, or entirely absent from, his scientific investigations, looms big. The "human element" enters into the equation. Just why the careful scientist is so easily misled in his study of the devious ways of Spiritism I shall try to show in the pages that follow.

First of all, one must clearly understand that a fact is not a theory; and an hypothesis is not a theory. An hypothesis is merely a supposition that is advanced as a temporary explanation. Sufficient evidence may show that it works as a rule,

that it explains the observed facts in a large number of instances; in which case it is called a theory. Many good scientists are merely observers and tabulators of facts. Only a few can formulate suppositions for the explaining of the facts. And it is only a rare man who can develop a good working theory. Countless are the laborers who can gather bricks for the House of Science, numerous are the masons who can put them together, but few indeed are the architects who can conceive a plan that shall join them all in harmony and truth.

There are two things to remember: first, while many are good at observing, very few are good at explaining correctly; and secondly, those few who can formulate acceptable hypotheses and theories upon their own subjects can very, very rarely do the same upon a subject that is outside their field.

At this point I think it would be well to quote the words of a well-known scientist in regard to the danger of accepting hypotheses and theories as infallible explanations of the facts:

“These constant changes of opinion—and in our own time we have seen several of extraordinary significance—ought to teach us another lesson, the greatest that science can teach, and that is humility. If a hundred times things have been put forward as the last revelation of

science and if on ninety-nine subsequent occasions it has been found that the supposed revelation was only a dream, let us on the one hundred and first occasion have the humility to say—as indeed most of the real framers of hypotheses have said: ‘This is a possible explanation of the facts to hand; let us see how it will fit in with later discoveries.’ It is abundantly clear that we are not familiar with anything but the fringe of science. Facts of all kinds are yet awaiting discovery, and when discovered it may be found that they upset some of our most cherished beliefs, as radium did.” (“The Church and Science,” ed. 1920, p. 406, Sir Bertram C. A. Windle, M.A., M.D., Sc.D., LL.D., F.R.S., F.S.A., etc.).

Now, why is the scientist prone to be misled in his inquiry into the phenomena of Spiritism?

A man of science is accustomed to laws of nature that are constant and to apparatus that is reliable and exact. In his scientific investigations he is not accustomed to count upon human malice and fraudulent skill. So it happens that great scientists are often like mere children in the occurrences of daily life. Furthermore, the scientist always tries to observe the phenomena on each occasion under exactly the same conditions. Finally, he is alert for an explanation that will be scientific.

Attend, let us suppose, a séance with a scientific

observer. The medium is a woman. Immediately we see that the phenomena to be investigated are not the phenomena of a chemical reaction or of an experiment with light, or of any ordinary scientific test. Besides, we remember that the "apparatus" is not mechanical, but human and of *extreme sensibility*—the medium. With her, let us say, is her chaperon. Of course—not only to help her in her trances but to be on hand for an emergency and to protect her. She is working among men and must undergo investigation. Surely a chaperon can be admitted. Mr. Scientific Observer is agreeable.

Several doctors and men of science examine the medium. The examination is scientifically complete. There is no examination of the room made, for it is the home of Mr. Scientific Observer. The positions of each observer and of the chaperon are scientifically arranged. Dressed in tight-fitting clothes furnished and scientifically examined by Mr. S. O., the medium enters the cabinet and draws together the curtains. The light, as requested by the medium, is red, and shades all with a sort of penumbra as in a photographer's developing room. That too is but scientific. Can you develop a photographic plate in full light? No. Neither can the medium her powers. It must be dark. She is, besides, as sensitive as a

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bromide plate, and any strong light may bring on a sudden faint or hurt her for future experiments. Mr. S. O. very scientifically observes all the conditions.

Near the red light is a secretary who takes notes of even the most trivial happenings. Then, the medium asks them to sing. The vibratory key of the investigators must be at least similar to that of the medium. Singing is one of the simplest methods of obtaining and attuning vibrations. They begin intoning a religious hymn in low, quiet voices. There is a strange tenseness in the air. The extraordinary manner of this experiment, no matter how often repeated, makes one thoughtful. What may not come from the Great Unknown? . . . Mr. S. O., however, is emotionless. He is not impressionistic to such effects. He sits rigidly and watches with the care that has always marked his investigations. Let us glance at the secretary's notes:

At 8 p. m. medium goes to cabinet and singing begins. At 8:05 they are still singing; 8:09, sobs are heard from the cabinet, the medium is moaning. "Margot, Margot," cries her voice, "come—hypnotize me." The chaperon goes swiftly to the cabinet. The hypnosis takes but a minute. The chaperon returns to her seat. 8:12, medium is breathing more quietly. 8:15, medium draws





FATHER HEREDIA DEMONSTRATES A FAKED MATERIALIZATION.  
(SEE APPENDIX II)



open curtains with her own hands. 8:17, a vague white spot appears over the head of the medium. 8:19, the blurred spot resembles a human face. 8:20, it is a face. At understood signal from medium three swift flash-light photographs are taken. 8:23, Mr. S. O. puts in new plates. 8:25, medium calls faintly for help. "Margot! Margot!" she cries. The chaperon hastens to the cabinet. 8:26, leaning on the chaperon, exhausted and half-dazed, the medium leaves the cabinet. 8:28, cabinet is thoroughly searched. Medium also undergoes another examination. Result negative. Nothing is found on medium or in cabinet.

The séance is over. The plates are developed. Tiny face of a woman is visible over medium's head.

It has been a strictly scientific experiment. All precautions possible have been taken. There is only one conclusion: the medium is a real materializing medium. The materialization of a face visible to the eye and caught by the camera is an effect of mediumistic powers. The medium's ectoplasm brought about the materialization. The existence of the ectoplasm is the only possible explanation. The proof is scientific. The experiment is conclusive.

However, with the pardon of Mr. Scientific Observer, we will analyze the experiment. There

happens to be another way of looking at the affair.

The chaperon is a confederate of the medium. Inside of a specially made comb, the medium very cleverly conceals a piece of muslin which forms the material of the materialization. The chaperon conceals in her handkerchief, which is a double one, more material for a materialization. In case of necessity she offers it to the medium—the medium is perspiring, of course. When she has used it—just for a minute, you know—she returns it to her chaperon. The medium while in the cabinet fixes above her head the *materialized muslin face*. Lo, when she draws the curtains wide the materialization appears. The camera catches the face before it vanishes—as it does when the chaperon goes to the cabinet. Thus we have an extraordinary case of materialization.

Mr. S. O. is well pleased. He has enjoyed for some years no petty reputation as a biologist. He writes an article on his experiment. Is not his word sufficient that every scientific precaution has been taken? Perhaps a friend laughs at him. For a moment he doubts, we may imagine. Then he has a picture of himself before the eyes of the neighborhood and beyond, as a man of reputation fooled by a clever woman. No, no. He sticks to his conclusion. There are more experiments and more conclusions. He publishes a book, with data

listed carefully, with pages carefully annotated, with many quotations from other investigators, with photographs, and with a few touches of fine writing here and there (which, to be sure, is pardonable), a little philosophizing, a paragraph or two about idealism, and at the end a few short, terse, simple words—for such is his scientific way—on “Hope Revived.”

The book is well received. The worst review is but non-committal. The various experiments he describes—without, of course, our analyses—become somewhat famous. Many writers on Spiritism who, unlike our scientist, have never been near a medium, quote these experiments and extend the interpretation. Edition after edition appears and the medium becomes famous. Her name is whispered with respect even by those who have no interest in Spiritism. The phenomena are scientifically recorded. You may have your own interpretation—but you may not laugh. Laugh as you desire at the miracles of Lourdes, for instance, but not at the work of our scientific observer.

For some time there was a scarcity of books on Spiritism. But those well-nigh countless men who make their living by writing pamphlets and small books on the “question of the hour” soon relieved the situation. As in time of famine people are not squeamish about the food they get, so thousands

here and in Europe devoured whatever they could lay their hands upon concerning Spiritism, although it proved the veriest trash. And as bad food invariably helps to spread an epidemic, this silly, unreliable literature has done more than anything else to augment the spirit-mania of these last years. I do not exaggerate. On my desk and around it, there is heaped a mass of evidence as flimsy and allegations as ridiculous as ever were gathered to uphold any wild supposition in the history of the world.

It must not be imagined that I consider all psychical phenomena ludicrous or easily explained. There are some very interesting aspects of this new study to which I shall come later. A human being is different from a lens or a mathematical problem. It has a soul, and a study of the soul's strange powers leads one to the entrance of an unexplored world, at the edge of which we stand expectant, waiting for him who shall first disclose its riches. Nor must it be thought that I am ridiculing all scientific investigation. On the contrary, sensible, cool-headed, resourceful scientific investigation is the one effort needed to prick many bubbles hovering over us. Until very lately, materials carefully gathered and disinterestedly put forth have been almost entirely lacking, but in the past years better work has been done.



If, in the experiment given in detail above—which, by the way, is a transcription of an actual experiment—the scientific observer had engaged one of the matrons from the Customs House to search carefully both medium and chaperon, if he had, regardless of the fainting proclivities of the medium, turned on a brilliant white light during the experiment, I, for one, would have given much more heed to his conclusion. But these scientific observers of spiritistic phenomena seem to be soft-hearted fellows, a little out of place at a séance, where they tiptoe about gently, not to err against propriety. In their works they list the precautions taken, and usually you find that the precautions are analogous to those they would take with a piece of mechanical apparatus. The subject calls for real scientists, long experienced in handling the human problem, who can gather *facts*, not weave fancies and suppositions, who can present those facts in a straightforward, unbiased fashion. If, at last,—and there is hope of it now—sufficient, well-founded information can be gathered, then it will be possible to frame trustworthy explanations.

## IV

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MEDIUM

**M**EDIUMS may not be the "best class of people," but they certainly are a clever, industrious class of people. The "greatest magician in the world," who used to hire the town hall, the sleight-of-hand-man who with his sleeves rolled up, entertained at the whist club, even the old fortune-teller with the shrewd eye, who would read your palm and pry the secrets from her greasy cards for half a dollar, all are gone. The world moves on. Now we have scattered across the country "M. So-and-So. Famous Medium." Thousands of them everywhere, with full equipment, eager to summon souls to converse and perform for a price that is judiciously adapted to your gullibility and the size of your pocketbook. Alas, that the poor gypsy with her tattered shawl has gone! There was something picturesque about her, something romantic, something in her wiles and wariness that was obvious and moved your heart. But these new establishments, most of them gaudy places with heavy hangings and dim

lights, pretending in atmosphere and decoration to orientalism or some exoticism, fill one with a strange disgust. They prey on the most sacred memories of man. There one never finds the gusto of the wizard of the fair, the gaiety of the side show. People want to be mystified. They crave humbug. But it seems too bad to feed them in this way, to capitalize their love for their dead and their yearning for immortality.

These mediums are organized. They are constantly on the look-out for new devices and for new methods of "communication." They have writers and a press. They take up the cudgels against those who oppose them. Few of them are honest. Those few may have some abnormal development, as, for instance, an ability to go into an actual trance, or a feeble telepathic power, which they capitalize. The others are downright fakers. I refer to the so-called "pay-mediums"; or, to use another phrase, "public mediums," the people who put the room in darkness and flash phosphorescent drawings before strained eyes; the people who give to pathetic creatures cardboard with rings of crudely-painted flowers on which is written "From Mother"; the people who sell double exposures as "spirit photographs."

I have a circular of a "school of mediumship" before me on my desk. It reads:

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ALFRED BENZON—MODERN SPIRITUALISTIC PHENOMENA  
COMPLETE COURSE

Initiation Fee—\$1,000 (one thousand dollars)

Consists of the following effects:

Slate Writing . . . . .	\$350.00	Materialization . . . . .	\$300.00
Cabinet Séance . . . . .	250.00	Ballot Tests . . . . .	200.00
Trumpet Séance . . . . .	150.00	Vase of Isis . . . . .	100.00
Spirit Photography . . . . .	50.00	Rope Tying . . . . .	25.00

I presume the initiation fee is high to insure that you will do no talking—at least, until you have made some profit. And then it is very improbable that you will desire to stop your income. No, after a \$1,000 payment you will hold on to whatever secrets you obtain. Everybody is not lucky enough to be able to take advantage of such a high-class education. Many poor mediums have to struggle along and use their own wits.

There is another type of medium, however, known as “private.” These mediums oftentimes have unusual powers. They are not supposed to “work for money.” They work a great deal for purposes of psychical research, for the advancement of science. They may not take fees, but as very few of them appear to be wealthy altruists, we cannot doubt that they are the recipients of gifts, and now and then receive rewards for their services. There is no reason to indicate why they should spend their time working for nothing, un-

less it be for the fun they have. To this type belong the famous Mrs. Piper, Eusapia Palladino and the present "materialization medium," Eva C. We shall glance at the psychology of both types, and thus be able to formulate some idea of what is meant by the word "medium." (See Appendix II.)

A medium, by definition, is a person *supposed* to be qualified in some special manner to form a link between the living and the dead. When dependent on the public for their livelihood, it is obvious that the most appropriate thing for them to do, is to please the public. It may not be always ethical, but that is another matter. The desires of the people today run strong. You cannot amuse them with the old, time-worn tricks. You cannot startle them by dropping nickels down your sleeves. A public medium lives on the favor of the public. She must eat, I suppose, and dress, and have a place to sleep. Often she has a family. She must have money. Suppose (and this is a far-fetched supposition) she really has some power. She finds clients in the waiting-room, and yet to save her life she cannot at that moment go into a trance. What does she do? She "fakes" a trance. Not once, but on every occasion. Then, she discovers that "Madame Somebody-or-other" across the street is making

more money by introducing new apparatus and new "foolers." She imitates. She studies the fine points of fooling the public. She adopts recognized methods. Perhaps she invents a little scheme of her own. It works. It means more money. So, the story goes.

Very often these mediums are evil women in league with other women and men. They go into Spiritism to fleece the public. They stop at nothing. They betray every trust. Their rooms become more than offices for communication with the dead. "Do you know that there is something behind the shadowy mask of Spiritualism that the public can hardly guess at?" asked Mrs. Margaret Fox Kane, one of the Fox sisters, in her remorse. And she tells what the public can hardly guess at, but I will not reprint it here. ("The Death Blow to Spiritualism," Davenport, p. 50, 51.)

Many mediums, on the other hand, start in the spirit of fun.<sup>1</sup> They begin innocently enough. In rare cases, their attempts to amuse themselves and others, uncover some peculiar faculties in themselves, for instance, an ability to produce "raps." But, as a rule, they delight their sitters with a product of their ingenuity, or with a trick that is "old stuff" for one who has been following séances, but is startling for those who have

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I.



never bothered their heads about the matter. Such is the tiny "rapper" in the shoe, easily directed by the toes of the foot. They create a sensation in a circle of friends. The sensation spreads. They become the centre of much interest. This attention delights them. Little by little they continue their demonstrations, adding improvements from time to time until finally they become so involved that confession would mean disgrace. Or, they discover, that with little labor they can provide themselves with a good income. Seldom, however, do they feel such remorse that, like the Fox sisters, they proclaim their deceit.

It is not out of place at this point to quote a few words from one of the most careful of the investigators of psychical phenomena:

"I need hardly say that if money be the chief and only object of the medium's ambition, practically no experimental work can be done. It is a matter of experience—my experience, anyway—that the medium and sitters must not develop any form of material greed, or the phenomena become undependable and unreliable." ("The Reality of Psychic Phenomena," 1919, W. J. Crawford, D.Sc.; p. 4.)

All considerations, but particularly those offered us by famous mediums who have confessed their fraud, move us to this conclusion: it is more

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difficult for a medium, even if she possesses some power, not to deceive, than to stop her deception after she has practised it on a few occasions.

When we examine the cases of private mediums, such as Eusapia Palladino or Eva C., the result is but little different. Eusapia Palladino for many years before her exposure was considered an extraordinary and genuine medium. There is little doubt that she possessed unusual power. But who could tell whether she was attempting fraud or not? Sir William Barrett wrote:

“ . . . although Eusapia appears to have these supernormal powers, she is a medium of a low moral type, who has been convicted of imposture in both England and America and with whom, therefore, I should not care to have any sittings. My reason for referring to her at all is the notoriety she has gained, and the instructive psychological and moral considerations her career affords.” (“On the Threshold of the Unseen,” p. 67, 68.)

This combination of fraud and real power is easily explained. A person of unusual “mediumistic” power is abnormally sensitive, as a rule. For example, she cannot go into a trance or levitate every hour of every day. If she is not in the proper disposition, if the mood is not on her, she

cannot produce any phenomena. There are no results or poor results. Sometimes she will confess her powerlessness in all honesty. Sometimes she will pretend impotency that a sitting may be postponed and more information be acquired in the interim. But most often when there is an important demonstration to be held, and she is the medium, and men of prominence are gathered and all arrangements are completed, even though she feels helpless, she will determine somehow or other to "see it through." Why is this so?

Private mediums do not work for money, but they do get money for their work. Someone interested in Spiritism or science rewards them for their time and labor. It is their work that has helped many an ordinarily feeble treatise on psychological research to enjoy a second or third edition. It is they who today furnish the plot for the scientific best-seller. Private mediums pursue a more remunerative business than public or "pay" mediums, except in rare cases. The great artists that graced the courts of kings in olden days were not forced, as were their less-gifted brethren, to sell their work at the market for a livelihood. They received bounteous gifts and were the recipients of many favors and honors. The private medium today is subject to much consideration by scientific men and men of power and prominence.

They are her beneficent patrons, and also the authors of her fame. She gains not only reward but prestige and influence. So, the medium, as in the case of Eusapia, feels bound to reciprocate kindness and consideration. Besides, she is loath to afford even one opportunity for detracting from the reputation of her ability. She wishes to give satisfaction. That is her professional pride. The attitude, at least, is human and very pardonable.

The occasion arises when she is not in a spirit to give a satisfying sitting. She realizes that genuine phenomena for that day at least are impossible. She must not disappoint the gathering. She resorts to some simple and effective ruse. It is doubly effective because of her established reputation. The deception is successful beyond expectation. She has a scientific reason for every move. A little artifice, unsuspected by the unwary scientific investigator, does the trick. For the flash of a moment she feels the thrill of the artist. The fascination for mystifying others, so prominent in the history of human motives, grips her. After the sitting she feels a glow of satisfaction and pride. Perhaps she has a vein of fine humor. All alone, or with her accomplice, she enjoys an hour of pleasant laughter. These serious-minded, profound men of science, lacking the simple wisdom of a child who would have seen through it

all! . . . What a chapter for a book! And so she starts down the facile and pleasant road of deceit. She has the experience of others before her as a warning. She will not, she determines, be caught as was Eusapia Palladino. Perhaps she never is. But perhaps there comes a day when a little slip occurs and among her sitters is a shrewd and sensible eye, and her day as a reliable sister of science is over. . . . If, besides her professional and personal pride, she possesses the "scientific" pride, as do Eva C. and her chaperon, Madame Bisson, she has another motive that strengthens her determination, "I must not fail." Her anxiety for success is greater. She resolves, above all, to satisfy. And usually she does.

What are the conclusions of this chapter? That there are no unusual phenomena contributed by mediums? No. Some mediums undoubtedly afford, without fraud, remarkable evidence. The power that accomplishes this and exactly what this evidence is, are subjects for later chapters. Just now I want to impress the mind with this consideration: whether a medium is public or private, of great reputation or small, the presumption *is always* against holding his or her phenomena genuine. Said Sir William F. Barrett, quoting a paper contributed by him in 1886, to the Society of Psychical Research:

“ . . . reviewing the numerous séances I have attended with different private and professional mediums during the last 15 years, I find that by far the larger part of the results obtained had absolutely no evidential value in favor of Spiritualism; either the condition of total darkness forbade any trustworthy conclusions, or the results were nothing more than could be explained by a low order of juggling. A few cases, however, stand out as exceptions.” (“On the Threshold of the Unseen,” p. 36.)

Human nature is human nature. As we said above, it is even more difficult for a medium never to deceive, than to change her course after she has practised deception once or twice.



## V

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A SÉANCE

SOME day, perhaps, there will be established a scientifically equipped, brilliantly lighted laboratory for the investigation of the various accomplishments of mediums. The human machine will then be subjected to the calm, critical, careful examination that mechanical experiments now undergo. Singing, dim lamps, perfumes, heavy draperies, accomplices, and the other appendages of a séance will be ruled out. But the medium will not agree to such conditions. Does she not need every natural aid to reach the sensitivity that will allow the spirit to communicate through her? True. But so much the worse for the medium and Spiritism. That a table is lifted by a human being under certain conditions may have some facts to uphold it. But that the table is lifted by a spirit working through this human being under those conditions may prove the wildest of fancies. Admitting levitation for the sake of argument, there opens up an unbridgeable gap between the fact and its explanation. All right, one may say, the table rises. But why the spirits?

Or, put it this way. In the dusk of a séance something brushes me on the cheek. Why cannot that something brush me on the cheek in a well-lighted, well-equipped laboratory? Because the spirits cannot work that way, answers the Spiritist. Then, may I not ask how anyone knows how the spirits act? Oh, they never do, is the answer. And so on, in the vicious circle: we know the thing happens because the spirit acts that way; we know the spirit acts that way because the thing happens. It is one task to establish some phenomena as certain. It is another task to establish the phenomena as psychical. And it is still another task to establish psychical phenomena as spiritual, or, if you wish, as instigated by spirits. The first of these tasks has been but attempted. Scientific opinion has not declared that the attempt has been successful. On the contrary, it doubts the conclusions of Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Barrett, Sir William Crookes, and the rest. (See "The Question," by Edward Clodd, *Science and Spiritualism*, Chap. XII.) The second of these tasks yet awaits careful, scientific endeavor. And the third task is, so far at least, in the realm of supposition. The relation of a medium's power to spirits is purely hypothetical.

The conditions of a séance lead a thoughtful mind to the conclusion that any phenomena at that

séance are produced by the medium solely, either through deception or through some unusual, but natural and not spiritual, power. An examination of a medium in a bright, up-to-date laboratory would help to establish her unusual power as certain. It may be established in an ordinary séance. But what was said in the last chapter of the tendencies of even the best mediums to deception, influences one to doubt the honesty of the evidence. In other words, considering the medium we are always inclined to doubt her honesty. It may be that she is not dishonest, but under the séance conditions demanded by her, and from our experience, we keep to that suspicious opinion until it is proved wrong.

In this chapter I am going to show that, just as experience has led us to doubt the veracity of the medium, so experience has led us to doubt the accuracy of the observers at a séance. This statement may sound bold at present, but the considerations I outline below will, I believe, justify it.

We attend a séance. The lights are low; they shed a dim red glow. The singing begins. There are strange shadows here and there and stranger reflections from the lights. The singing stops for a while. The silence is tremulous and fraught with vague anticipations. The atmosphere is ghostly. Around us are the other sitters, strained

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and expectant. If we attend with the desire to see or hear something, we shall not be disappointed. As investigators, if not expectant, we are at least prepared to see or hear something extraordinary.

The medium's face becomes pallid, her eyes close little by little as if their gaze was lost in misty distances, her lips quiver. There comes a low moan. It moves you as you have seldom been moved before. Another low moan. The tension grows. You want to jump, run, do something. . . . But hush, there comes a soft, ominous tapping, and then a little flutter, afar off it seems. The figures crouch beside you. Then silence. But not for long. Something invisible touches you lightly on the head. Someone whispers to you that your mother is there, that she wants to talk to you. A strange pang comes, as always when you think of your dear, dead mother. Can it be true? you ask yourself. Is my mother come to this strange earthly gathering? Your emotion grows. Perhaps it *is* she. Why not? For a moment you wonder whether or not you should cry out in scorn and laugh, laugh at the whole affair. . . . But no. You feel the sacredness of the dead, the sacredness of even the name of mother.

The tension grows. You feel alone. Hush, you hear a voice. Then the strained, unbearable si-

lence again. Is it all a play? The thought crosses your mind. No. No play ever moved you as this. The voice comes again, softly, distantly, tenderly. Is it your mother's voice? No. You try to remember. It comes again, pleading this time. Yes, it is your mother's voice. In broken phrases the voice tells you of a little incident that happened far back in childhood. You want to say something. But you are dumfounded. You are about to rise. . . .

The séance is over. You go out. Perhaps afterwards you laugh. Perhaps you return again. Perhaps that thought of thoughts haunts you on your pillow or at your work: the dead have spoken! You feel as Sir Oliver Lodge, when he believed he had heard from his son Raymond.

Pass on. Your experience is an interesting psychological study. You have laughed at those who told you they had heard from a dead mother, or son, or wife. You now realize that whatever the circumstances, it is no laughing matter.

But of what worth is your testimony as scientific evidence? Very little. The setting, and your disturbed emotions, your expectations, the effect of the group, all tended to destroy your accuracy of observation and any reliability in the report of your observations. The above case may be an extreme one, but the difference is only of degree.

Suppose we take the experience of the "scientific observer." To begin with, there is the setting of the séance. The lights are low, or perhaps there is no light at all. Says Dr. W. J. Crawford, one of the scientific spiritualists:

"The plain fact of the matter is that anything like advanced phenomena cannot be obtained in any but the feeblest of lights." ("Hints and Observations for Those Investigating the Phenomena of Spiritualism," p. 82.)

Good light is certainly necessary for good observation. That requisite is missing. The theories of the scientific observer may come from inspiration, but surely his knowledge comes through the senses. The light in such cases is not conducive to the accuracy of visual observation at least. And when the séance is held in the dark, as often, there is no observation, no careful scrutiny at all.

The strangeness of atmosphere—a factor entirely absent from the ordinary investigations of the scientific observer—tends to increase his *emotional* sensitiveness. That feeling of mystery, of something extraordinary about to occur, influences his disposition to see and believe the mysterious and extraordinary. If there is music and singing, these also, unless the investigator is deaf, increase his emotional receptivity to vague impressions. The scientific observer may not be ex-



pectant. Perhaps his mind is absolutely indifferent. Yet, the effect of the setting moves him at least to a *readiness* to believe. If, in the séance, the observer receives some apparently startling information which is reported to come from one deceased, whose memory he still warmly cherishes, his emotional balance is apt to be completely overthrown. Disturbed sensibilities absolutely prevent accurate observation, whether by ear or eye. The evidence of one or of several investigators under such conditions cannot be accepted as reliable. Court trials teach us that it is seldom that two witnesses of the same event report, on their own initiative, the same or even similar details, even when they have been prepared to watch the incident, and the incident has occurred in broad daylight. Feeble is the testimony of one or of several witnesses under the extraordinary psychological conditions of a séance.

If there is a group of observers at the séance, a new factor enters to render the evidence even less reliable. The tension of a group is greater than the tension of a solitary person. With a crowd the predominating impression is contagious. If one man sat alone in the orchestra of a deserted theatre and watched a gripping play, the effect of that play on him would be far less than if he were one of a strained, hushed multitude at

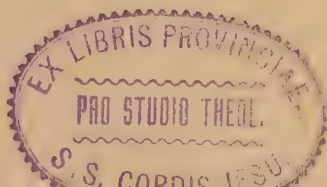
a crowded house. At the thrilling finish of a baseball game the emotional force of the crowd grips the normal man until he is no longer himself. Every one, intellectual and illiterate, artist and laborer, is caught up in the spirit of the crowd. Stolid, phlegmatic old men leap to their feet with wild hurrahs. Similarly, men and women at a séance are no longer merely themselves. Try as they will to remain unchanged, the effect of the crowd influences them. Someone whispers: "Did you see that? Did you hear that?" And in the strained atmosphere of the room they soon believe that they heard and saw something.

A face appears in the dim light—the materilization of a spirit! According to my own experience, about eighty out of one hundred present will recognize the features of their grandfathers. To the others the face will appear to be some other relative or friend now dead. There is no man who is absolutely emotionless. No matter how scientific his training, how balanced his faculties, he will be caught up in some degree by the spirit of the crowd. In the laboratory his observations would usually be reliable. But in the crowd at a séance it is seldom that his testimony will be more than partially accurate. And any theories he formulates under that strain are almost invariably to be looked upon as dubious.

All these conditions may not be present at a séance. But I set them down at length here in order that people may be guarded against accepting as absolutely reliable such testimony under such conditions. To be sure, there are conditions under which the testimony of one man, or the testimony of a crowd as a whole may be taken as trustworthy. But not where some or all of the conditions are such that they tend to prevent accurate observation and to warp and disturb the judgment.

Men of scientific training, such as Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, and Sir William Barrett, have been "taken in" at a séance. (See "The Question," by Edward Clodd, p. 271, 272.) Mediums, through frauds that were afterwards detected or confessed, have fooled thousands. Even where the phenomena have not been produced by fraudulent methods, a report of what happened can seldom, because of the conditions, be accepted as absolutely reliable. How accurate this testimony is and how able men are to observe phenomena of this sort may be learned from the declaration of that shrewd woman, the founder of Theosophy, Madame Blavatsky:

"I have met with no more than two or three men who knew how to observe and see and remark on what was going on around them. It



is simply amazing! At least nine out of every ten people are entirely devoid of the capacity of observation and of the power of remembering accurately what took place even a few hours before. How often it has happened that, under my direction and revision, minutes of various occurrences and phenomena have been drawn up; lo, the most innocent and conscientious people, even sceptics, even those who actually suspected me, have signed *en toutes lettres* as witnesses, at the foot of the minutes! And all the time I knew that what had happened was not in the least what was stated in the minutes." (Quoted by Edward Clodd, *ib.*, pp. 272, 273.)

It is all these considerations—the setting and atmosphere of a séance, the poor light, the expectancy or readiness to believe, the strained emotional state due to our own disturbed sensibilities or to the effect of the crowd, the common inaccuracy of man in observing details, and the imaginative factor in reporting what was seen or heard—all these that have led me to conclude that the presumption is against accuracy of observation and report of the phenomena of a séance, as it is against the honesty of the medium. There are influences hinted at above, such as man's inclination to believe what he fancies he sees, and to grow in his belief as he ponders it. And there are other factors that enter into the equation,

some of which we have touched upon in previous chapters, such as the peculiar psychology of the scientific observer who applies to the human agent the same method he uses for simply material experiments, and the natural desire of people in general to be mystified. All of these considerations enter into the weighing of the evidences of a séance, and incline one to discard so much of it, or at least move one to place a doubting finger upon it.

There is one other point that we must not forget here, and that is, that almost all of the spiritistic literature has been compiled and written by men who start with a theory and seek for facts to justify it. This policy must often result in much misinterpretation of facts, and in the exclusion of many considerations that might tell against the pre-formulated theory. And this may be done by many in all honesty. But besides these faults, the policy is also open to the objection that in a case of doubt the benefit will be given to the theory to be proved. This is the common practice of men in all works; they allow their enthusiasm or their personal aims to enter into what should be a disinterested examination of facts. One cannot fail to notice the enthusiasm and eagerness on the side of their own theory in the works of men like Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Conan Doyle.

Without a consideration of the natural credulousness of man and his desire to be deceived, the tendency of a medium to satisfy this desire, the ease with which an ordinarily accurate scientist can be fooled, the total dissimilarity between a séance and the regular scientific investigation, and the inclination of observers to imagine and distort and misinterpret, a convincing study of Spiritism cannot be made. As in few other scientific problems, the investigator must bear in mind the variations and weaknesses of the human factor.



## VI

### WHAT ARE PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA?

THE House of Spiritism is built largely of rubbish. To gather out of the immense mound of rubbish the real material that deserves scientific consideration is a task that will keep a host of careful investigators busy for many years. These investigators must cope with a jumble of débris much larger and more confused than that Lavoisier faced when he began to weigh the material of the Alchemists to build the magnificent edifice of modern chemistry. What is true and what is not? What is of value and what is not? These are the questions the workers must answer. The work is vast and difficult and the reliable workmen are few.

There is great confusion, not only among ordinary people but among those who have written at length on Spiritism, as to just what are psychical phenomena. Anything unusual, any demonstration that cannot be readily explained, any event that has a strange significance, is generally headed "a psychical phenomenon" and treated as such. Dr. Joseph Lapponi, for example, in his book,

"Hypnotism and Spiritism," describes a séance at which, through the agency of a single medium, a great number of happenings occurred in an amazing confusion that included almost everything from spirit rappings to Hindu tricks (p. 107-128, English trans.). They are all "psychical phenomena," according to the Doctor's judgment, and constitute for him "the foundation of Spiritism." One can easily surmise what he himself admits—that he has had no personal experience in the matter. (Ib. p. 184.)

The first difficulty has been that no one has given an accurate definition of psychical phenomenon. Just what is a psychical phenomenon? It seems strange that so many should have written about psychical phenomena without having first established just what psychical phenomena are. Let us endeavor to supply a practical definition here.

A psychical phenomenon is a sensible effect provoked by a medium as an instrumental cause and produced, through forces generally unknown, by an unseen intellectual agent as a principal cause.

*(Effectus sensibilis a medio tamquam causa instrumentali provocatus, et, viribus generatim incognitis, ab agente intellectuali occulto, tamquam causa principali productus.)*



"AN ASTRAL ARM AND HAND"

AN AUTHENTIC PHOTOGRAPH OF A FAKED PHENOMENON, TAKEN IN WORCESTER, MASS.  
(SEE APPENDIX IV)



Once we have this definition clearly in mind, a great number of the difficulties of the spiritistic problem will be easily explained. The germ of the present confusion regarding Spiritism, a germ that is the cause of countless inaccuracies and misinterpretations, is just this failure to comprehend what psychical phenomena are. Too often, the blows directed against Spiritism fall harmless because they are aimed wide of the mark. Instead of at once clearing the field of everything that is not a *bona fide* psychical phenomenon, they enter the lists with every strange circumstance the Spiritists care to introduce, and then by devious unsuccessful devices endeavor to circumvent it. The fact is that psychical phenomena, indeed almost all the phenomena of a séance, almost all the evidence offered by mediums, have nothing to do with spirits at all. The assumption that every curious phenomenon is a point scored in favor of Spiritism, is an assumption which both sides seem willing to accept. Then the debate settles down to one side vehemently insisting that these phenomena occur, while the other side as vehemently protests that they do not, or, if they do, that they are all fraudulently produced. If it is agreed that the phenomena do occur, then the opponents seem to feel that their only ground for further argument lies in considering just what kinds of spirits cause

the phenomena. We shall treat in more particular, later, this important question as to when, if ever, the agency of spirits of any kind must be assumed.

I shall now explain my definition.

A psychical phenomenon is a *sensible* effect; that is, a phenomenon perceptible by the senses. This sensible effect is provoked by a medium: *provoked* here means brought about by, elicited. A *medium* is a person who has the faculty of producing, in special circumstances, certain phenomena in which the directive action of an exterior mind appears. The medium is like a wireless receiver that is tuned for certain waves. At any given moment the receiver may or may not receive any message, but it is ready to receive the message when the waves for which it is tuned are intercepted by the antennae.

The sensible effect is provoked by the medium as an *instrumental cause*: that is, the cause that produces the effect under the influence of the principal cause. It is not a principal efficient cause, but an instrument. (*"Causa instrumentalis est quae producit effectum, pro ut subditur virtuti causae principalis."*) When the medium is a principal efficient cause in producing the phenomena, the phenomena cease to be psychical.

The sensible effect, while brought about by the



medium as an instrument, is "produced, through forces generally unknown, by an unseen intellectual agent as a principal cause." An *unseen agent* is an agent that is not immediately or easily known, but is in some way hidden; an *intellectual agent* is an agent similar to the medium, inasmuch as it has intellect, but distinct from the medium, "as a *principal cause*, i.e., a cause which of its own power produces an effect." ("*Causa principalis est quae ex propria virtute effectum producit.*") Such would be the wireless operator who sent the message caught by the receiver. The medium, as we said, is the receiver. The wireless operator is the other unseen mind. It must be carefully noted that in this definition we exclude from the heading "psychical" all the activities of the medium's own mind alone, no matter how unique they may be. Startling messages and visions the origin of which can be found in the subconscious mind of the medium will not be considered as psychical, but only those phenomena that can be said to be produced through the medium by another mind somewhere working as the principal cause.

What do I mean by "forces generally unknown?" In the study of all psychical phenomena two things must be distinguished: 1, the actual *force* that produces the effect; 2, the *mind* behind

and directing that *force*. For example: the force that produces the movement of the wireless receiver across the Atlantic is electricity; the mind directing that force is the wireless operator in New York. The difference between the force and the mind behind the force is too often overlooked or not comprehended and, in consequence, the confusion becomes serious. This difference we will bear in mind while we examine two types of psychical phenomena:

1. *Automatic writing*: the pencil or pen of a medium, held loosely in her hand over a piece of paper, begins, apparently of its own initiative, to write in the medium's own handwriting or another, a message containing information unknown to the medium and outside of the medium's experience.

In this case we have: *A*: the muscular *force* that moves the hand independently of the medium's will. And *B*: the *mind* that directs that muscular force and delivers the message. Obviously, the *force* is known—muscular force. But the *directing mind* is *unknown*. It cannot be the subconscious mind of the medium if the message is outside of her knowledge and experience.

2. *Table tilting*: delivering a message by tilts of a table.

In this case we have: *A*: the tilting produced

by an *unknown force*. *B*: the *mind* that directs the force and produces the message. The force that tilts the table is not known. The mind that directs the force is likewise not known.

In the first case, that of automatic writing, we see that the force is known; in the second case, table tilting, we see that the force is unknown. Hence we say, not that the force is always unknown, but that it is *generally unknown*.

With this definition, then, and heeding particularly the distinction between the force and the mind directing the force, we shall endeavor to separate the false from the true in the heap of phenomena known as *spiritistic*, and to discover just what may be held as genuine psychical phenomena. Diogenes' quest was simple in comparison with ours!

## VII

### RESEARCH FOR PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA: FRAUD

I AM well aware that the expression *psychical research* is given a much broader interpretation by the "English Society for Psychical Research" than I give it here. When, in 1882, the investigators of that Society began their very commendable policy of collecting such material as might help to construct a new branch of human knowledge, psychic science, accurate information as to just what might be psychic and what might not, was not available. Hence these investigators considered it wise to examine every happening that had the appearance of the supernormal, whether it was a spiritgram, a theosophist mystification or simply a Hindu trick. This time has passed. Too much spurious and superfluous data clog the present treatises on Spiritism. It is time now, if any one is ever going to establish a reason for a science which is psychical, to define clearly just what is to be considered. There may or may not be a good foundation for a psychic science. But we may be sure that there never will be, with-

out a clear definition of what psychical phenomena are. By considering that they are sensible effects which, though brought about by a medium acting as an instrument, are primarily produced by an invisible mind using forces which are, as a rule, unknown, we have a starting point and are able to eliminate much that is irrelevant. We can then decide just what phenomena have any bearing on the supposition that the spirits communicate on the provocation of mediums, and what are merely unusual and strange, with no bearing on the question of Spiritism. In other words, we are interested not in any peculiar powers that a medium may possess of his or her unaided self, but in what the "other mind" is, that in certain instances influences the medium.

I may eliminate, to begin with, all the phenomena of somnambulism, hypnotism, hallucination of the senses, catalepsy, hysteria, automatism, and similar phenomena, when their source may be traced to the subconscious, or, if the phrase is preferred, to the "not yet conscious" mind of the medium. Such phenomena come under the study of biology, pathology, psychology, and allied sciences, and are not what I have defined as psychical phenomena.

It may be objected that *psychical* phenomena belong to the province of psychology. I hold that

there is in man but one principle of all operations—the soul. I do not admit the duality of human personality. Psychology is the study of that soul in its various aspects and activities. “Psychic Science,” the study of what I have called psychical phenomena, is a study of the “other mind” and how that other invisible mind acts upon the mind before us. It may, if one pleases, be considered as a branch of psychology, but it must not be confused with the more prominent activities of that science. It is only by making the *unseen intellectual agent* our chief objective that we can discover on what grounds the spiritistic hypothesis rests. In our study of this outside influence we may discover new powers of the subconscious mind, but such discoveries will be only incidental to our main purpose.

I may eliminate, also, all that evidence which is accepted by so many gullible writers as genuine, and which is, to anyone familiar with the art of a magician or with the resources of human invention when mystification is the object, simply the product of clever trickery or clumsy fraud. There is an astonishing amount of these “phenomena,” produced by simple humbuggery or honest ingenuity, which is readily accepted both by the opponents of Spiritism and by its followers. How huge this amount is only he can know who



is familiar with the works of the host of writers that have treated Spiritism, and who at the same time has taken pains to familiarize himself with the methods and resources of mediums and magicians the world over. I know from my own intimate experience the amazing number of people who come wide-eyed to narrate to me some extraordinary demonstration they have witnessed, which was but a very interesting trick and which I could myself do for them in a very few minutes. There is, for example, the playing of an accordion by the "spirits." No human hand plays the accordion and yet harmonious music is forthcoming. It sounds and appears unusual—still, it is but a trick which I will explain on a later page.

"The spiritistic marvels worked by the Indian fakirs are guaranteed as true, not only by Jaccolliot, who spent many years of his life in India, but also by the missionary Huc, by Eugene Nus, by Olcott, and by many other Europeans, who were altogether astounded by the performances." ("Hypnotism and Spiritism," Eng. trans., p. 153.)

So writes Dr. Lapponi and he also gives examples of these "spiritistic marvels," but the marvels are explained in any good book of Hindu tricks. For instance, Dr. Lapponi says: "Among the wonderful operations which the Indian fakirs

perform and attribute to the spirits is to be recorded that of hastening vegetable growth." He then quotes a long passage from Jaccolliot, who tells how a fakir he met by chance near Benares made a papaw grow. How the Hindu fooled Jaccolliot may be discovered in Samri S. Baldwin's "The Secrets of Mahatma Land Explained" on pages 55 to 59, or in Dr. Herward Carrington's "Hindu Magic," page 5 and following. In these booklets also may be found explanations of many other "spiritistic marvels."

Father Eustaquio Ugarte de Ercilla, S.J., in his treatise, "Modern Spiritism," goes out of his way to give philosophic and scientific explanations of similar marvels. Beginning with page 440, for example ("El Espiritismo Moderno"), he discusses at length the famous phenomenon witnessed by so many travellers in India—the fakir's funeral. He describes (page 446) how the fakir who is buried can, by regulating his respiration, bring upon a cataleptic condition and thus remain underground apparently dead. The explanation is very interesting, but not as interesting as that of Baldwin in the work quoted above (*Ib.*, p. 51, 52).

"... the Fakirs suggested that one of their number be buried alive. A grave between five and six feet deep was speedily excavated in the

soil. The grave was made between seven and eight feet long and about two feet six inches wide at the top, and for about four feet in depth was quite perpendicular. Then a little projection was allowed, and the balance of the grave to a distance of about two feet in depth was not quite two feet wide.

“The Fakir who proposed to be buried was apparently hypnotized, became rigid and stiff, and was then wrapped in a cloth and placed in the grave. Then across the little shelves, as it were, on each side of the grave, some thin planks were laid, so that when the grave was filled in, the earth would not come in contact with his body. The soil was then replaced to the depth of about six or seven inches when one of the Hindoos jumped into the grave, and trampled the earth down solidly and heavily, and as each five or six inches were filled in this was repeated and the soil packed as tightly as possible by the naked feet of the Fakir’s assistants, until finally the entire grave was completed, and it certainly seemed as if he was laid away for his final rest.

“I asked how long the man would remain there, and was told ‘as long as the *Sahib* pleases.’ I finally said we could let him remain there until the morrow morning, and it was arranged with our party that we should take such watch during the night as would prevent the grave being disturbed. In the morning, shortly after breakfast, it was decided to open the

grave, which was done. It certainly bore no appearance of having been disturbed in the least; in fact, certain marks and fastenings which we had placed upon it to prevent it being tampered with were exactly as they had been left. But to our surprise, when reaching the bottom of the grave and removing the planks, the Fakir was not there, and while I was looking at the empty grave in thorough amazement as to where the man could have disappeared, I suddenly felt a light touch upon my shoulder, and on looking around, the Fakir stood before me in simple humility, bowing almost to the ground, with his hands clasped in front of his forehead, making the customary salutation of '*salaam, Sahib,*' and petitioning for *baksheesh*."

"The grave," continues the writer, "was purposely made large and roomy, but apparently as if merely in the haste of digging it and without any design in the matter.

"When the first soil was thrown in upon the planks covering the Fakir, the noise made by the falling clods prevented the onlookers from hearing any movement on his part. He simply broke through the small division of earth separating him from an adjoining excavation, and which allowed him to have plenty of air. It then became very apparent why the Hindoos so carefully packed in the soil with their feet every five or six inches. The noise made by their tramping feet and the crash of the spade was

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sufficient to cover the noise and movement of the Fakir as he crawled into the adjoining cavity and made his way gently into a hollow tree, whence, after everybody retired at night, he emerged and slept the sleep of the just, surrounded by his virtuous and guileless family."

It is obvious that, if the excavation had been postponed a week or two, the "buried" fakir would have appeared just the same, or, as is sometimes done, would have been discovered in the cavity at the bottom, back to which he had crawled before the excavation was begun, or during it, apparently in the same state in which he had been buried.

Father Ugarte de Ercilla makes much of Sir William Crookes' famous experiment with medium Home<sup>1</sup> ("El Espiritismo Moderno," p. 168), in which an accordion held by the medium was played, supposedly, by the spirits. The accordion is held in one hand by the keyless end and the other end allowed to hang untouched toward the floor, so that manipulation by the medium is impossible. A wire netting is placed around the suspended accordion so that no hand can reach the other end to move the instrument to admit the air necessary for making the sound, or to press

<sup>1</sup>Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in a recent magazine article (Hearst's, July 1921) called Home "The most remarkable man since the Apostles." Home died insane.

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the keys to play the notes. Yet, after a few minutes, a tune is heard. This demonstration produces an extraordinary effect on the sitters. It can be done in full light. Usually the accordion is suspended under a table which is a haunt for spirits, or is at least so considered. This is generally held as one of the best of the spiritistic phenomena.

I offer the same demonstration in my lectures. After a few minutes of expectation I give a signal to a friend behind the partition who plays a tune on another accordion. As he is invisible and as the source of the sound is not discoverable, especially when attention is riveted on the visible instrument, the effect is as convincing as the humbug is simple. The power of a demonstration is usually in direct ratio to the stupidity of the device that produces it. Sometimes my friend, taken up with his playing, fails to notice the signal to desist, and continues his tune after the accordion is no longer suspended. The effect of this little slip in arrangements is even more extraordinary on the auditors, as it was on Sir William Crookes.

Another rather famous "spiritistic marvel" is the séance in which the medium is tied and the lights put out. Articles are thrown about the room in the dark, sitters feel hands brush their



cheeks or pinch them, and so on. When the lights are switched on the room is in disorder. Confetti has been showered, in some cases, over the sitters and the furniture, articles are found out of place, hats and coats disarranged, and similar disorders that bear witness to the work of some agency. Evidently it was not the medium, for his hands are firmly tied. Who was it? The spirits—has been the answer.

Yet, the answer is wrong. In the dark any of the sitters in league with the medium could have been guilty. But the medium did not need an accomplice. There is a manner of disengaging one's hands from knots and replacing them almost immediately. During the dark the medium's hands were free. The trick is very simple. I use it myself in my lectures. The Thomas brothers use it, as did the famous Davenport brothers. J. S. Hickey, *O. Cist*, quotes the work of these Davenport brothers as furnishing real inexplicable phenomena. ("Summula Philosophiae Scholasticae," p. 201, 202, and note.) Yet J. N. Maskelyne, in his book, written together with Dr. Lionel A. Weatherly, "The Supernatural?" exposed this notorious fraud.

"Before the death of one, however, both of them (the Davenport brothers) publicly renounced Spiritualism, and declared that the

whole performance was the result of trickery and dexterity. Notwithstanding this admission and my exposure of the tricks, Spiritualists still maintain that the Davenports were assisted by spiritual agency." (p. 180.)

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, by the way, still puts faith in the rope-tying séances of the Thomas brothers. (See his introduction to Sydney A. Moseley's defence of Spiritism: "An Amazing Séance and an Exposure.") Mention of this sort of phenomena, even with the above-mentioned approval of the creator of Sherlock Holmes, might seem out of place because of their very crudeness did I not know that it is just this sort of phenomena that is influencing thousands in favor of Spiritism. (See *Ib.*, p. 19-27, inc.)

I mention these cases of trickery because they are quoted by Catholic opponents of Spiritism, as examples of *genuine phenomena*. One can easily imagine what sort of evidence is needed to move the ordinary devotee of Spiritism.

There are thousands of cases of so-called "spiritistic phenomena," which are current as genuine and yet are simply the product of trickery or fraud. There is, for instance, the famous demonstration in which the medium reads sealed writings. When an adept performer does the trick the result is extremely mystifying. There

are several ways of doing it, according to the circumstances. Describing one method, David P. Abbott writes ("Behind the Scenes with the Medium," p. 101): "I use for this (the envelope sealed with wax containing a name) *colonial spirits*, which is an odorless wood alcohol manufactured in this country. If a sponge saturated with this be rubbed across any piece of paper, it is rendered instantly transparent, as soon as moistened; and any writing under it can be easily read. In a few moments the alcohol evaporates, and the transparent condition of the paper disappears." The author goes on to describe in detail how he skillfully accomplishes his object. He also explains how other secret writings are read by a medium, and describes at length the various processes of slate-messages, their reading and the reply to them. His book is a very good fund of information on this question of mediums and their various "messages."

Spirit photography is one of the greatest sources of "evidence" and at the same time one of the best examples of the success of sheer humbug. Spirit photography of the type which Sir A. Conan Doyle considers genuine, snap-shots of fairies, and Mrs. Dupont Lee's "psychic photographs," are in the class of nursery amusements. Spirit painting of the Thomson-Gifford class as

reproduced and explained by Professor Hyslop (see p. 208, figures I to X, in his "Contact with the Other World") deserves no better appellation. And photography of "materializations" similar to that reproduced by Baron von Schrenck Notzing, "practising physician in Munich," in his work, "Phenomena of Materialization," in most of which even an unexperienced eye can easily detect fraud, can be held only as a blot on the study of psychical phenomena.<sup>1</sup> In almost all spirit photography a student of the science can discover the most obvious forms of deceit, from double-exposures, superimposed drawings, and other devices of "plate doctoring," to the very simple schemes by which the medium fools the photographer. In the last mentioned case it is often hard to believe that the investigator was not collaborating with the medium in a plan of deception.

The mention of Mrs. Lee's psychic photographs recalls to mind an experience of mine during a lecture in New York City. I was speaking of this obvious form of deception and during my talk I held up to the audience a photograph by Mrs. Lee, reproduced by Dr. Hereward Carrington in his book, "Modern Psychical Phenomena" (opp. p. 132), described by him (p. 132) as a "profile of Dr. R., the balance of the plate being filled with

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix II.



"SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY"

A FAKED GHOST ON A REAL PHOTOGRAPH ; TAKEN UNDER "TEST  
CONDITIONS" IN CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

(SEE APPENDIX IV)





faces, most of which are strikingly biblical in character." At the same time I held up a copy of Hoffman's "Christ Before the Doctors." A comparison of the two pictures made it immediately obvious that the "biblical" faces had simply been clipped from a reproduction of Hoffman's painting. Dr. Carrington was in my audience, and with that splendid fairness that has marked all his research, he arose and declared publicly that the picture would not appear in any subsequent edition of his work. I mention this not to detract from the work of Dr. Carrington, than whom there is no abler and more honest scientific investigator of psychical phenomena today, but to point out how easily "spirit photography" can be produced. (See Appendix IV.)

So much of the phenomena adduced in favor of Spiritism has been shown, after careful investigation and after the confessions of mediums themselves, to be the result of trickery and deceit, that one finds it difficult to give each "new and startling" piece of evidence the fair and disinterested consideration which the pursuit of scientific truth demands. The suspicion that fraud and trickery are lurking somewhere and that the overwhelming evidence of today will be overthrown by the exposure of tomorrow, cannot be cast aside. And is there any wonder when one recalls the names

of the greatest mediums who persuaded scientific men of the genuineness of their demonstrations and afterwards were detected in deceit or confessed it? Among the Americans, there are such names as the Fox sisters, Bly, Colchester, Foster, the Davenport brothers, Mrs. Fay, "Dr. Slade," Florence Cook, Eglinton, Mumler; those among the English are Mary Showers, Hudson, Herne, Williams, Rite, "Dr." Monck, Petty and Farman; among the French, Buguet, Debord, and Madame Amouroux; Frau Rothe from Germany; and the famous Eusapia Palladino from Italy. For a slight idea of the various methods of the numerous impostors who have worked under the banner of Spiritism one has only to glance through works such as: Abbott's "Behind the Scenes with the Mediums," J. Frances Reed's "Truth and Facts Pertaining to Spiritualism," Weatherly's and Maskelyne's "The Supernatural?" Baldwin's "The Secrets of Mahatma Land Explained," Clodd's "The Question," and—most striking of all—Dr. Carrington's "The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism."

I do not claim that all phenomena are fraudulent. Here I am referring to "psychical phenomena," a classification which has its genuine examples; but note that I do not say that Spiritism

has any genuine, scientific basis. On this point I might say, with Professor Flournoy:

“Spiritism, as I understand it, is a complete error. The facts which I have been enabled to study at first hand have left me with the impression that, despite certain superficial appearances which the man in the street accepts as conclusive, these phenomena are not spiritistic in reality, and one would be greatly deceived if he accepted them at their face value.” (“Spiritism and Psychology” pref., p. viii.)

But there are some facts, after the elimination of all fraudulent evidence and after the elimination of all evidence which has its origin in the mind and powers of the medium only, which deserve consideration as real *psychical phenomena*, as I have defined that term. Again I repeat that this does not mean that even if certain phenomena are proved *psychical* that they are therefore *spiritistic*. To prove that is another problem, and its burden lies heavily on the shoulders of the Spiritists.

In my next chapter I shall endeavor to eliminate phenomena that are traceable to the medium solely and bear no relation to the *other mind*. When that is done we may more quickly move on with our quest for true psychical phenomena.

## VIII

### RESEARCH FOR PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA: THE FORCE

IN this chapter, which forms another step in the process of elimination, I come to phenomena which are unusual and, as far as it is possible to determine, free from fraud.

In the treatment, a distinction previously made will be used, the distinction between the *force* that produces the phenomena, and the *mind* that directs the force. A brief consideration of the force or physical part of these unusual phenomena will show that in most cases a natural explanation is probable, and in the remaining cases, possible.

Later, a consideration of the few phenomena that point clearly to the direction of an *outside mind*, will likewise show that a natural explanation of this outside mind is in most cases probable. Consequently there will be left but a few cases which do not *readily* admit the possibility of a *natural* explanation. It is then that we shall have reached the bottom of the matter. And it is then that we shall endeavor to answer the ques-

tion: *Which of the three hypotheses, the spiritistic, the diabolical, or the natural, offers the most probable explanation of these remaining phenomena?*

I shall here consider briefly various *natural* phenomena, which are nevertheless constantly introduced as overwhelming evidence in favor of Spiritism. Here I treat of the force or physical part of the phenomena. Later, I shall discuss whether or not there is an unseen intellectual agent at work.

First, we consider phenomena, the unusual character of which may be traced to some mental or physical disorder, or both.

*Clairvoyance*: the supposed supernormal faculty of seeing persons and events which are distant in time or place, and of which it is supposed no knowledge can reach the seer through normal sense-channels. The faculty is usually exercised in the trance state. When a glass globule is used by the seer in a waking state, it is called crystal-gazing. The physical part of clairvoyance may be very obviously classified under the head of hallucination. It must be remembered that here I do not refer to any *messages* that are given by a medium exercising this faculty of clairvoyance.

*Clairaudience*: the supposed supernormal faculty of hearing sounds or words inaudible to the

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normal ear, affording knowledge of present, past, or future events, which knowledge could not have reached the medium through normal sense-channels. This faculty, too, is exercised often in the trance state. When it is exercised in the waking state, a shell or small sounding board is employed to provoke activity. The physical part of clairaudience, like that of clairvoyance, can be easily explained by the natural, though abnormal phenomenon of hallucination.

*Hallucination* is "a false perception of sensory vividness arising without the stimulus of a corresponding sense-impression." It differs from "illusion" in that it is not merely the misinterpretation of an actual sense perception. Visual and auditory hallucinations are very common. Almost all of us have experienced at some time or other the hallucination of a song or tune which haunts our ear, sometimes for days. Our dreams are but forms of hallucination. Hallucinations are usually associated with various mental and physical diseases, sometimes the effects of drugs or liquors, and some hallucinations far surpass true sensorial impressions in their vividness. Indeed, a victim of a strong hallucination cannot distinguish between his purely subjective sensations and those that are objectively produced. Hallucination is often accompanied by a change of voice, just as



some people who talk in their sleep, talk in voices different from their waking hours. The voice, too, may seem to come from a distant point, and not from the person under the hallucination. It is very easy to understand how anyone who is subject to vivid hallucinations, especially in a semi-conscious state, can confuse the subjective and objective impressions of both the ear and the eye. And it is also easy to see how so many have made the error of considering even the physical part of clairvoyance or clairaudience, a supernormal phenomenon, and endeavored to adduce it as evidence of the influence of spirits.

Another phenomenon met with in an investigation of Spiritism is that of *materialization*. A *materialization* is the formation, through mediumistic powers, of an ephemeral or temporary physical organization, visible, sometimes palpable, and susceptible of being photographed. It is obvious that there is a wide difference between materialization and clairvoyance, for in clairvoyance the sensible object can be seen by the medium alone. A "materialization" is the scientific name for a ghost, when the apparition is called forth by a medium. Primarily, it is a luminous phenomenon. It is also material, or such is the assumption, for proof of the senses is not available since such apparitions cannot be touched "without in-

juring the sensibility of the medium," as the medium is considered to have a vital connection with the ghost.

There is nothing so extraordinary about the *physical part* of materialization that one need look beyond nature for an explanation. There are many mineral substances which possess a phosphorescent or fluorescent, or, to use the ordinary word, a luminous power. The so-called "radium" used in recent years to illuminate watch faces is familiar to everybody. There are plants in tropical countries that exhibit this phenomenon, and the phosphorescent glow of tropical seas caused by the presence of myriad luminous infusoria, as well as the existence of luminous fishes in the dark sea depths, is commonly known. There are the fire fly, the glowing eyes of owl or cat, the luminosity of the human retina, under some conditions, to bear witness to this very natural effect. The ordinary man has in his body phosphorus sufficient for the manufacture of more than half a million matches. It is not a mere fancy, then, to believe that in some circumstances our body, or at least some parts of it, may become luminous enough to produce a sensible glow or halo that can impress a photographic plate. Mr. Walter J. Kilner of London in his recent book, "The Human Aura," asserts that by the use of "dicyanin," a

coal tar dye, he has succeeded in making the human aura visible to the human eye, thus transferring the study of this "occult phenomenon" to the province of physics.

The assertion that this luminous emanation is susceptible to touch and may be weighed, does not detract from, but adds rather to, the evidence for a purely natural explanation. It must be stated, however, that the proofs of this assertion ("Phenomena of Materialization," Baron von Schrenck Notzing) rest on very dubious ground.<sup>1</sup> The study of "materialization" is at present in a very crude state, and the conclusions from that study afford little help in determining an explanation. That the explanation may be found in ordinary nature, however, is most probable. There is no difficulty in admitting that under some morbid or abnormal conditions a luminous emanation may appear around the body of a medium.

Another unusual phenomenon which is a subject of constant discussion is automatic writing. *Automatic writing* is executed without the medium's volition and sometimes without the medium's knowledge. The medium, for example, holds a pencil over a pad of paper and suddenly, without any conscious control the hand moves the pencil to inscribe a message. The message is some-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix III.

times of an astonishing character, apparently beyond the power of the medium. The messages of the ouija board are but a form of automatic writing, though the method of production is different.

Is there anything extraordinary about the physical part of automatic writing, anything so baffling as to surpass all possibility of a natural explanation? Nothing. (The message is another question.) The physical part of automatic writing or of the movement of the indicator over the ouija board, is little different from that exercised in the many forms of somnambulism. Somnambulism is a natural though abnormal condition in which talking, walking, and other actions of a more complicated nature are performed during sleep without the agent's consciousness or after-recollection. Somnambulists, or sleep-walkers, are of different classes: *A*, those who speak without acting—automatic speaking; *B*, those who act without speaking; *C*, those who both act and speak; *D*, those who, besides acting and speaking, have the sense of touch active, and also possess active senses of sight and hearing. This last class merges into the physiological condition of mesmerism or hypnotism. All these various forms of somnambulism are natural though abnormal phenomena and a study of them is the object of branches of physiology and allied sciences. It

must be remembered that sleep-walkers do not merely walk, but under some conditions perform actions of a complicated nature which are far from being simply mechanical, such as the writing of letters, reports, poetry, etc., the making of sketches, the playing of musical instruments, and the accomplishing of physical feats, such as swimming, which the agent in a conscious state could not accomplish. In a word, the somnambulist "acts his dream" whether his dream is of mechanical action or of intellectual activity, as in the writing of poetry or the solving of a mathematical problem. There is no good reason for seeking beyond abnormal natural activity for an explanation of the *force* producing automatic writing and talking. The automatic writer, whether awake or in a trance, bears too close a resemblance to the somnambulist, and the phenomena bear too close a resemblance to somnambulistic phenomena, to lead one to search for an hypothesis that does not start with nature.

Consideration of the physical part of the *trance*—that most prominent of all "spiritistic" phenomena—brings one to a similar conclusion. There is no accurate definition of what a mediumistic trance is, but there are many descriptions of the various ways in which this phenomenon is observed in different mediums. It is best to give

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a general definition and then endeavor to explain. Accordingly, a mediumistic trance may be considered as an abnormal state resembling in many particulars the somnambulistic state, but also resembling in some degree the hypnotic state, during which the medium frequently displays an exaltation of memory (hypermnnesia) or of the senses (hyperesthesia) or even of the intellectual faculties. Although the medium appears at times to fall into a deep sleep, and to retain, on regaining the normal condition, no memory of any experience during the trance, in spite of this unconsciousness, it seems that the medium displays intelligence in her movements, speech and writing, whether exercised spontaneously or in response to verbal interrogation, and even greater intelligence than in her conscious state, together with greater emotional activity. In many cases the parts of the medium's body not directly at work remain in a complete lethargic condition. In these cases the medium often writes automatically or talks automatically, or does both, displaying a knowledge of which in her normal state she has no experience. According to some reports this knowledge is of such an extraordinary character as to admit of no satisfactory explanation save that of a third mind. This brief description is sufficient to show how difficult it is, even for experts, to distinguish



the trance state from the somnambulistic or hypnotic state, or from similar abnormal physiological states, or from a state that is a combination of them. This description is sufficient also, to show that there is no need, for the explanation of the physical part of a trance, to leave the realm of natural hypotheses. A consideration of the message, or the knowledge, given out during a trance, is reserved for the chapters that deal with this division of our study.

Volumes could be devoted to the investigation of the trance alone, but it is not the purpose of this book to give an exhaustive study of all or any of the phenomena connected in recent years with the study of Spiritism, but rather to show how few of these phenomena have any bearing on the spiritistic hypothesis, and to point out how feebly those few uphold that hypothesis, and by this elimination, and also by this outline, to clear the way for those who study the question hereafter. It is for these reasons that I emphasize the distinction between the *mind* at work and the *force* at work, and it is for these reasons that I insist that because certain phenomena may be inexplicable they are not *therefore* spiritistic.

Perhaps the most common phenomena met with in this study are "raps" and the movement and levitation of tables and other objects. These raps

and disturbances may have a meaning or they may not. "Evidence for 'raps' is good," says Mr. Northcote Whiteridge, "and there is respectable evidence for movements of objects." (Encyclopedia Britannica, "Medium.") Raps occur usually under circumstances such as these: the medium is in the room which is in darkness, partial or total; suddenly, on summons or spontaneously, a tapping is heard, usually light, on the tables, chairs, walls, etc., without the intervention of any apparent physical agent. The levitation or movement of tables and other objects occurs under similar circumstances. Sometimes the objects moved or levitated are touched slightly by the medium; sometimes there is no physical contact.

It is obvious that the *force* in these phenomena is unknown. But there is no reason for seeking a preternatural cause. Nature, as we know it, exhibits a force similar to this: magnetism. Loadstone, for example, can attract steel, and can communicate this property by contact. A piece of amber after rubbing will attract bits of paper. A horse-shoe magnet will attract iron filings, and the filings around the poles will arrange themselves in such a way as to indicate the field and direction of the magnetic force. Why? We do not know. We know the fact. We do not know the explanation. A powerful horse-shoe magnet will not at-

tract the bits of paper. A stick of amber will not attract the filings. Why? Again, we do not know. The ordinary phenomena of magnetism do not bring the consternation to us that the magician and his huge electric magnet brought to the African blacks some years ago. But it is not because we know the reason of magnetism any more than the African natives. It is simply because we know how to direct the force.

In spite of all the efforts to interpret raps and levitation as supernatural activities, the phenomena in their *physical part* remain very much of the earth, and, as experiments continue, appear more and more analogous to the phenomena of magnetism. They may have some direct relation to gravitational force, or they may not. But, at any rate, rapid strides are being made in directing the force behind them. Dr. W. J. Crawford apparently has successfully applied the laws of physics to the phenomena. (See "Experiments in Psychical Science.") He sets down as one of the rules of a productive séance that "The phenomena must not be produced spontaneously, but must be under command." ("The Reality of Psychic Phenomena," p. 3.) The phenomena of levitation and raps seem to be in the same state that the phenomena of electricity were in a hundred years ago. No one today screams "The devil!" at the

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sight of an electric spark. And yet today we do not know what an electron is. We know some of its phenomena and how to control them.

Dr. Carrington quotes a very interesting experiment of Professor Maxwell and his friend, M. Meurice, given in the Professor's book: "Metaphysical Phenomena," p. 291.

"When I tried an experiment . . . I bade M. Meurice sit in an armchair and lie perfectly still. I placed his arm at about one foot from the table and told him to *fancy* he lifted his arm and struck the table, without, of course, making the slightest movement.

"We obtained some excellent raps in this way. This is a fine experiment for it shows clearly the production of raps by the *will*—the direct, conscious and personal will.

"We tried three series of experiments: six raps in each series were willed; we received four raps in each, that is to say, 66 per cent. of success. The raps were loud, one was double. The medium nearly fainted after this experiment, but came round quickly, though he has not been well since." (Dr. Carrington's "The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism," p. 345.)

Here is another point. The existence of human magnetism has been a subject of much dispute, but there never has been advanced any good reason for denying the possibility of it. Now, I have discovered from my own experience and from what

I have read and heard in consultation with authorities, that a medium, while he or she can attract a wooden table of heavy weight and levitate it, cannot attract or move a metal table that is smaller and lighter or of the same size and weight. Dr. Carrington told me that Eusapia Palladino always refused to work with a table on which there were metal ornaments or even nails, asserting that she could not levitate a table if it had metal in or attached to it. Dr. Crawford in his "Hints and Observations for Those Investigating the Phenomena of Spiritualism" declares (p. 78, 79):

"The type of table used in these experiments is of some importance if good results are hoped for. To begin with, it should be made of wood, and a wood of not too great density. An open porous wood is also best for the reason that the psychic energy—which, as I have said, seems to be associated with matter in one of its finest forms—appears to be required to be stored up in the wood, and if the latter is too dense and hard, these particles of matter cannot effect a satisfactory lodgment."

Dr. Crawford, in his latest experiments, says that out of the medium's body extends a sort of rod, and this rod or prolonged arm is what moves the tables and produces the raps. ("Experiments in Psychical Science," 1919.) I do not

admit or reject this proposition. I offer it only as an argument in favor of the possibility of a force emerging from the medium's body in a way similar to the magnetic force from the loadstone.

It must not be imagined that here I endeavor to give an explanation of the physical side of levitation, raps, etc. I merely advance some few ideas out of many, which go to show that a natural explanation of these phenomena is very possible. I maintain that the *force* or *forces* which produce the phenomena mentioned in this chapter may be ascribed to the list of already known natural forces or compared with other forces already known to us. At best (for the spiritists), it must be admitted that it is almost impossible in cases under dispute to decide whether the *physical* part of the phenomena is to be traced to some abnormal, though natural, condition of the medium or to some preternatural force.



## IX

### RESEARCH FOR PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA: THE MESSAGE

**A**LTHOUGH Spiritists have widely advertised the physical part of unusual phenomena as evidence for their belief, it must be clear to anyone who will give the matter even a little thought that these unusual phenomena must be proved to be the product of preternatural forces, at least, before they can be offered as evidence in support of the Spiritistic hypothesis. Spiritists are very far from having proved this point. And a difficult task is in their hands, for it is far more reasonable and possible to prove that the physical part of unusual phenomena is simply the product of natural, though abnormal, forces. It is tedious to have to repeat this thought on so many occasions, but it must be made clear that the uniqueness or strangeness of a phenomenon in no way proves that it is the product of a spiritistic force. The error is as common as it is childish. The Spiritist interprets every unusual occurrence at a séance as evidence in favor of his theory. And

his opponent either denies the occurrence itself, or laboriously tries to prove it the product of fraud or caused by the Devil. Yet the phenomenon is, in all probability, the effect of some natural but abnormal power.

The *mind* that directs the force so that a message is produced is the factor that must be looked to for spiritistic evidence. I say "so that *a message is produced*," because it is only by a study of the message that we may arrive at a knowledge of the *other* mind outside that of the medium. I think this must be clear. If, for example, a table tips at a séance, there is no good reason to believe that a mind other than the medium's is directing the force that tips it. If, however, the table is tipped so that it produces a message, the content of which is entirely outside of the medium's knowledge and experience, then we are justified in assuming that a mind other than the medium's is at work, and we are acting reasonably when we attempt to discover just what and where that outside mind is.

In this chapter we begin our study of these messages, whether they are produced by table-tipping, raps, automatic writing, crystal-gazing, working the ouija board, or what not. Following our previous method, we shall try first to eliminate those messages which, of however startling a character,

may nevertheless be produced by the medium through trickery or through the powers of his or her subconscious mind. (As will be explained later, "subconscious mind" is used here in no rigid sense, but merely to denote the acting of the mind which is unconscious, or "not yet conscious," as one prefers to interpret the term.)

Fraud plays such a prominent part in the production of messages that I will devote a little space here to the devious methods employed by mediums in the use of it.

The effect of any message is startling when its source, whether natural or preternatural, guesswork, playfulness, or deliberate deceit, cannot be determined at the time the message is received. For the moment we are astonished. It is the same mysterious impression that a conjuror incites when he conceals from us the connection between the cause and the effect. Accordingly, we must be careful not to judge the *power of the message by the effect it produces on us*, but only after we have made a thorough investigation of the cause, and determined that it is, at least, extraordinary.

One attends an ordinary séance, and is astonished when the medium, through her "control," or accomplice "in the other world," it is intimated or declared, tells the auditor something about his past or present life, or about his dead or living

relatives or friends, that he thought few or he himself alone had known. He is entirely ignorant of how the information was obtained. The effect startles him, and he assumes *the intimated cause to be the correct one*. Yet, if he only knew!

One method of obtaining this information is so simple that it rarely occurs to the auditor's mind. And still the effect is considered marvellous. I refer to the gathering of information before a séance. Before I give a lecture in a city, I go about visiting the friends and relatives of persons who are to attend the meeting. These short visits supply me with a vast stock of information, some of it being so small and unimportant (for example, the number of a watch) that the "victim" is just so much the more amazed. If one begins with a small bit of information, the clever cross-examination, especially when the one examined is somewhat puzzled, will produce much more. This examination is called "fishing" and is a very fruitful resource for a medium who is caught unprepared.

J. Frances Reed, one-time public medium, in her book, "Truth and Facts Pertaining to Spiritualism," gives an interesting account of how mediums obtain information on a large scale, by the aid of a "dope book."

"In every city throughout the world there are any number of mediums practising these different phases of mediumship, and in order to hold their patronage, it is very essential that they keep on hand a good stock of this information; so every medium makes a 'dope book,' and keeps it where he or she can refer to it on a moment's notice. The author will first explain the many different ways that these mediums secure this information. A medium is always on the alert and makes memoranda from the conversation of the sitters. They also watch the daily papers for death notices, etc., and also secure a great deal of information by making indirect inquiries. Children are also a great help to them in securing this desired information. Some of these mediums, on a pretense of looking for a lost or departed friend, will visit the coroner's office, where a record is kept of all deaths. They will also look over the burial certificates of the undertaking establishments" (p. 27, 28).

The same author goes into some detail explaining further how this "dope" is gathered from tombstone to family Bible.

". . . it would be very interesting for some of these credulous spiritualists to read one of these mediums' dope books, and they certainly would be shocked if they could hear a few of these mediums trading and swapping their dope and telling who were the easy marks, and giving the names of their departed dead. If a

strange medium arrives in a city he at once hunts up the most prominent mediums and receives this so-called 'dope' . . ." (p. 29).

On the following pages of her book the author gives some extracts from a "dope book." One is particularly interesting. It runs:

"Allen, Hattie M.—widow—friend of Jesse Carr, dressmaker of Chicago; she has her mother's estate to settle in Tennessee; maiden name, Hattie Clure; mother's name before marriage, Hopkins.

"Husband's name—Edmund P. (I have kept my promise to come back) (died 1907). She has living sister, Mrs. O. J. Babcock, living with her. She does not believe in Spiritualism; is a Catholic. (Will she ever see the truth?) (She will learn in the spirit world.)

"Father's name, J. R. Clure. He had long black beard. Daughter Emma died when a baby. Has daughter living, Mrs. Lucile Hanford, in Chicago."

Dr. Carrington quotes an interesting passage from Truesdell's "Bottom Facts," p. 310-12 ("Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism," p. 313, 314):

"The most feasible way of introducing yourself to a new town is by means of a systematic



canvass of the same, with the ostensible purpose of disposing of some manner of merchandise, such as books, patent medicines, and household utensils. Do not disclose to anyone your real business, or ultimate design. Keep your eyes and ears open, and learn all you possibly can, both of the living and the dead, among prominent Spiritualists. Provide yourself with a blank book suitable for the pocket, which contains an index. Under the proper letter, record every name and date which you imagine may be of future service. From these notes, you will be able to prepare, at your leisure, such a history as will materially assist you afterward."

Truesdell also gives instructions how to find who are the principal spiritualists in town, and how to obtain information of them at the post-office or news-room of the town.

"This preliminary work is called 'planting a town.' The larger the area planted, and the more thorough the work, the more abundant the harvest. When you have carefully canvassed one town, according to these directions, proceed to another, and there repeat your labors. Never think of entering upon the harvest until you have planted at least six towns, though double the number would be still better. If, by any means, you can sustain yourself for a period sufficient to thoroughly plant from twelve to twenty large towns, a good business is virtually ensured you for life."

Dr. Carrington speaks of a "Blue Book" issued by the "Brotherhood of Mediums," a great reference book which was compiled from the contributions of various mediums, and which contained vast amounts of information of use to mediums in séances. ("Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism," p. 314.) This "Blue Book" was immense in size. An idea of its thoroughness may be obtained from the fact that under Boston alone it contained data about seven thousand names. The existence of the "Blue Book," however, as Dr. Carrington remarks in the second edition of his work, is not proved (*Ib.* vi). But that some records of information are kept by mediums can hardly be doubted.

Private mediums use methods similar to those of public mediums. Sometimes, as their field is much smaller, their work is much easier. At other times, however, because of the carefulness with which they are watched while under investigation, their work must be more insidious and ingenious. A prominent private medium who was demonstrating for a group of scientific men once told me a rather interesting scheme which she employed to receive information.

The medium was secluded in a country cottage, and had no direct communication with anyone in the outside world. She received no mail except

from her family, and this mail she allowed the scientists to open and examine before it was brought to her. Her séances were astonishingly successful. Her plan was very simple. One of the three men examining her correspondence was an accomplice. When he wished to convey information to the medium he made dots in invisible ink under various letters in the communications, thus forming the words of the message. The dots were invisible. They were made apparent only by the application of some chemical the medium possessed in a scented bottle, labeled "Perfume." She followed the dots through the pages of the letters or magazines she received, and thus obtained whatever information was necessary for a successful séance.

The same medium told me of another method she employed to obtain information. She secured the aid of an expert "lip reader" who, by watching groups of men and women in hotel lobbies, theatre boxes, streets, stores and homes, supplied the medium with information of such an unusual and private character that to have obtained it otherwise would have been an undertaking of the greatest difficulty.

There are many other methods of obtaining information which I have not space or desire to list here. I give these few to show how easy it is

for apparently startling messages to be merely the result of very unspiritual prying into the life and affairs of the victim. It is obvious that, in our quest for psychical phenomena, we must omit all these messages that are fraudulent, or that show the probability of having been obtained through ordinary or deceitful means.

We are examining messages that come from the *mind*. That most of the messages which come from a mind originate in the mind of the medium, is my next proposition. Then, we shall be free to consider those messages which we can believe with some certainty to have come from an outside mind.

## X

### RESEARCH FOR PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA: THE MESSAGE FROM THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

**I**T will be well, at this point, to say a few words about the powers of the mind. Only the barest of outlines can be given here, but even a brief summary, it is hoped, will be sufficient to afford an idea of the startling mental resources which we possess.

We have only one mind, but this mind can work either consciously or unconsciously. When we are dreaming, during slumber or under the influence of an anesthetic, we are said to be in an unconscious state. Nevertheless, in this condition of dreaming our minds are at work. When, in a dream, we see some person, we have a subjective impression. In our sleep we cannot determine if that subjective impression has a corresponding external object or not. On the other hand, in an hallucination, we may, for example, see the same person. The impression is so vivid that we advance to touch this person—and we find that the person was only a creature of our mind.

In the first case we cannot verify our impression; in the second case, we can.

We may call *consciousness* the state of mind in which we are able to compare the objective evidence and the subjective apprehension, and *unconsciousness* the state in which we are not able to make this comparison.

This definition will be sufficient for our needs. It must be understood, however, that many unconscious actions and functions are performed while a person is in a conscious state. When we talk, for example, we may move the hands unconsciously. A piano player's fingers find and press the various keys unconsciously. Many functions of the body, such as the functions of digestion, of breathing, and so on, are ordinarily performed without any conscious thought or direction. During deep reflection or absorbing conversation we may lose all consciousness of the action and direction of our feet in walking. The examples of this unconscious action in a conscious state are many and common.

The human mind is one. We consider it conscious when it directs our conscious acts, unconscious when it directs our unconscious acts. It is not that we admit the duality of the human mind. It is merely that we take two different points of view in considering its operations.



The terms *subconscious* and *unconscious* have, of late, come to possess different meanings. In these pages, unless expressly remarked, we make no distinction between them. By *subconscious mind* is to be understood the *unconscious mind*, and nothing else.

The mind is like an iceberg; seven-eighths of it are under water, one-eighth alone is above the surface. The part of the ice above the surface resembles the conscious mind; the part below, the subconscious mind.

The mind is like a cinematograph taking pictures constantly. Some of the images are vivid, some faint, and some so slight that they can be seen only through a powerful lens after the film has been made more clear by some special chemical process.

Day and night we receive innumerable impressions through the senses. These impressions are recorded. According to the impression they make we may recall them. If they are vivid they may be recalled at will; if faint, only after a mental process. If they are slight they are beyond the summons of the will. This happens, for example, with forgotten impressions which we know exist and which we cannot recall. Impressions that cannot be recalled at will, we say, are in the keeping of the subconscious mind. Sometimes the will

in its search for an impression so incites the subconscious mind that later, when the will is intent on a matter totally different, the impression unsuccessfully sought leaps into the field of consciousness. This is the experience of everybody. Oftentimes, in endeavoring to recall a name, or to remember the location of an article, the will gets no information. Later, while talking of something else or searching for some other object, the name or location is suddenly remembered.

It has been estimated that there are, in the brain, more than ten billion cells ready to receive the sense impressions of our whole lives. Of these a very small proportion is controlled at will. The greater control a person has, the greater we say his memory is. Some people have a memory especially sensitive to color and especially tenacious of color impressions, but not so for figures or faces. Others have especially retentive memories for musical sounds but not for historical facts. And so on.

Ordinarily, and it is well for us, the subconscious mind keeps in the background of our lives. Or perhaps I should say, in the normal man the whole mind is not deeply and actively conscious.

The subconscious mind sometimes gains control of our nerve centers so that we may act during our sleep as if we were conscious. This takes

place commonly with the somnambulist. At times the somnambulist under the control of the subconscious mind, accomplishes things that he could not accomplish in a conscious state,—as, for instance, the writing of a poem or the solving of a mathematical problem. This condition may be brought on by the use of anesthetics, or it may become more or less habitual, as with many who go into trances.

I recall a story which a friend told me, of a young man who, about to go under an operation, requested him to be present in the room. After the young man had “taken” ether, his friend noticed that he was making various peculiar remarks, some of which were profane and startling, for the young man was of a mild and retiring temper. As he went more deeply under the influence of the anesthetic he began to murmur various verses with some degree of consecutiveness. His friend took them down in shorthand, and reviewing them afterwards discovered that the young man had composed a poem. He thought this strange since he was quite sure that the young man was not inclined to writing verse. With the intention of finding whether or not his friend was secretly favored by the Muse he kept his notes and said nothing. Not long after, the young man, fully recovered from his operation, was amusing

himself and a group of friends with the ouija board. The first messages of the board were very profane and succeeded in horrifying the company not a little. Then the indicator became rapturous in its communing, and its full communication turned out to be a little poem. Astonishment gripped the curious audience. The indicator then moved over the board and spelled the name—Robert Burns. A hush fell over the spectators. For a second every one imagined that he felt the influence of the heather-roaming rhapsodist. Then, the young man's friend who had been with him in the operating room produced his note-book. The profanity and poem were the same as those which had been stirred from the subconscious by the anesthetic. And the prestige of ouija was shattered in that crowd.

I tell this story at length not for any special lesson attached to it, but because it shows what unusual and oftentimes startling phenomena may be traced to the incited subconscious mind. A disturbed or abnormal mind may produce extraordinary effects. The explanation may not always be at hand, as in the example above. But too much care cannot be taken to avoid confusing the products of this subconscious mind (which is an unfathomable ocean of many and varied ideas) with the products of a third mind. I have no space

here for a scientific discussion of the subconscious mind. Psychology gives the natural explanation of some remarkable phenomena that are widely offered as evidence of the interference of spirits with the daily life of the world. It is only when a communication is clearly beyond the powers and tremendous resources of the subconscious mind of the medium, that serious credence should be placed in the influence of an outside mind. It should never be forgotten that, as with the iceberg, only one-eighth of the mind normally is in the light of consciousness. Underneath the surface floats the seven-eighths that is unconscious, the great bulk of the mind, which only a catastrophe or an unusual accident or some abnormal condition can bring into view.

## XI

### PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA

**A**RE there real psychical phenomena?

In the presence of all the material accumulated through the centuries it seems that the answer must be—yes. We are like the builder who stands before a heap of ruins endeavoring to discover whether or not there is material there good enough for the erection of a new edifice. In all that rubbish there must be something of use, he argues. But he can be sure only after he has examined it.

Here, it is well to recall the method we have used in examining the débris heaped about Spiritism. First of all we eliminated all the phenomena whose physical part could be traced to fraud or trickery. Then, from the phenomena that remained, we endeavored to strike out all those occurrences the physical force for which, though abnormal, was nevertheless natural. With the remaining body of phenomena we turned our consideration to the intellectual factor and proceeded to omit all evidence that bore marks of





YARDS OF "ECTOPLASM" JUST "MATERIALIZED" FROM A FALSE FINGER  
AND THE CROSS BAR OF A COMB.  
(SEE APPENDIX III)



deceit. And finally, we struck out all evidence that could possibly be traced to the mind of the medium herself.

It seems that, even after this rigid weeding process, there are some phenomena left which are really psychical—genuine sensible effects which, although brought about by a medium acting as an instrument, are primarily produced by an invisible mind using forces which are, as a rule, unknown. It is true that no definite conclusion may be reached until *each particular case is carefully examined and authenticated*. But considering the mass of evidence as a whole, one may say with some safety that real psychical phenomena do exist.

Then, what is the cause of these psychical phenomena?

For the sake of clarity let us describe and examine two cases of real psychical phenomena. Not that I claim that such cases have actually occurred, but similar cases have been reported. Just now it is our purpose to concede the possibility of the reality of these hypothetical cases in order that our treatment of them may not be hampered by any denials of fact. However, it must not be imagined that one cannot deny the veracity of much of the evidence that is adduced from reports of phenomena that resemble these. Indeed, it

would be unscientific to admit any of the evidence that is so fluently and abundantly offered us from platform and printed page, unless the phenomena on which such evidence is based have been honestly and carefully investigated and authenticated.

1. A medium through raps or by table-tilting conveys the following message to a sitter :

"I am your aunt. When you were eight years old you sprained your ankle in a fall from a tree in the corner of the orchard. You had climbed the tree in search of a bird's nest. I alone knew of the incident, for you told no one else, not even your mother."

The sitter remembers the incident. He had told his aunt and no one else. This is a hypothetical case, of course, but we will consider it as having happened and as true in detail.

2. A medium in a trance writes automatically this communication :

"I see a man of about sixty years, rather stout, bearded and wearing steel-rimmed spectacles. He has just now been killed in an automobile accident in Melbourne, Australia. His name, he says, is Thomas J. Queen, and he was formerly in Los Angeles. He wants you to communicate with his son, John, who is now in San Francisco."

The sitter investigates the case. He finds that there is a John Queen in San Francisco, that his

father, Thomas J. Queen, formerly of Los Angeles, was in Melbourne, Australia, and that he was killed on the very day that the medium gave him the message.

Now, if these cases are true, as we suppose, what *mind* was it that, using the medium as an intermediary, furnished the information given in the messages?

Three different theories have been advanced to answer this question: The "Diabolic Theory," the "Spiritistic Theory," and the "Natural or Telepathic Theory." These three theories I will discuss briefly in the following chapters. I do not admit or reject any of the three. I propose merely to present the reasons for and against each theory and leave the decision to the judgment of the reader.

Note: We must remark that in these two typical cases we have purposely avoided anything that may appear as "real knowledge of the *future*" or reading the heart or inner thoughts of men. In either case, according to the teaching of theologians and the sense of the Church, *only God* is able to do this, and so neither telepathy, the discarnate souls, nor the devil, can know the future or read the hearts of men.

## XII

### THE DIABOLIC THEORY

WHEN the question is asked, what is the physical cause of psychical phenomena, many immediately answer—the devil.

Applying this theory to the two cases we are considering we would mean that the devil, using his preternatural powers, produces the raps, tips the tables, or moves the hand of the medium to write, so that by his power and direction the medium supplies the information that is furnished primarily by him. This information is startling because of the preternatural powers of the devil's mind. According to this theory the devil's mind is the *other mind*. The medium is only the instrumental cause. The force that physically produces the phenomena, as well as the mind that directs the force, are both from the devil, who in these instances exercises his preternatural powers. In other words, *every medium is possessed*. The advocates of the theory do not state this explicitly; but to declare that the devil is the physical cause of the phenomena is equivalent to declaring that the medium is possessed.



Although the distinction is not necessary, many theologians divide this intimate physical interference of the devil with man into *possession* and *obsession*. When the devil acts upon the body from *within*, that body is said to be *possessed*; when the devil acts upon the body from *without*, it is considered *obsessed*. According to Father R. P. Poulain, S.J., in his splendid work, "The Graces of Interior Prayer" (p. 428), a person is *possessed* by the devil

"when at particular moments the devil makes him lose consciousness and seems to take *the place of the soul* in his body; making use, apparently at least, of his eyes in order to see, of his ears to hear, or his mouth to speak, whether to those who are looking on or to his own companions. It is the Devil who suffers, as though from a burn, if any object that has been blessed is brought into contact with the skin. In a word, the Devil seems to be incarnate in the man.

"We shall say that a person is obsessed when the Devil does not make him lose consciousness, but when, notwithstanding he torments him in such a way that his action is recognizable, inflicting blows, for instance."

The Ritual warns the exorcist *not to be very ready* to think that anyone is obsessed, and not to confuse the diabolic attack with certain mala-

dies. "St. Philip Neri," says Father Poulain (*ib.*, p. 432), "who had great power over demons, was extremely slow to believe in the reality of a possession."

I have said enough about methods that mediums employ when working legitimately and, as in our two hypothetical cases, giving real psychical phenomena, to enable the reader to judge whether or not mediums show any signs we would expect in a diabolical possession. The ordinary phenomena of the trance, of automatic writing, of table-tipping, etc., are undoubtedly well enough known to allow the reader to make a comparison. But, lest he should not be familiar with the phenomena of possession, I will give a typical case at length. This particular incident is told by Mgr. Delalle, vicar-apostolic of Natal, and is quoted from "The Question of Miracles," by the Rev. G. H. Joyce, S.J. (p. 125 et seq.).

"Two months ago I promised the editor of "Rome" a relation of certain facts which happened in my vicariate last year (May, 1907), concerning two native girls (Germana and Monica), whom I believe to have been possessed by the devil. I shall simply relate the facts without a word of comment, and shall content myself with vouching for their absolute truth. If anyone thinks differently from me on the subject, he is quite free to do so! I mean, pro-

vided he admits the facts, he may draw his own conclusion.

"There is in the Vicariate of Natal a mission now in charge of the Trappist Fathers, where a great deal of good is done, although it was a long time before any results could be seen. This mission is dedicated to St. Michael, and is about twenty miles from the nearest village, the magistracy of Umginto.

"For several months I was constantly receiving letters from the priest in charge of St. Michael's, in which he declared that two girls of the mission native school were possessed by the devil, and asked for permission to practice solemn exorcisms. After some time I allowed him to do so, and things were quieter for a little while, but soon the distressing phenomena appeared worse than before. I was very much annoyed and hardly believed it was a case of possession but rather put it down to hysterics. Unable to go at the time, I gave permission to the Abbot of Marienhill either to go himself or to delegate a priest who would inquire into the facts and if necessary exorcise the girls. But a few days after, I found I could go myself and wrote to St. Michael's telling the priest to expect me.

"I was very uncertain yet and called the priests (three Trappists) and also the Sisters, and asked them some particulars about the ways of these girls. Here are some of the things they told me:—

"They carry enormous weights, which two men could hardly lift (the girls are about sixteen years old) ; they understand Latin when in their fits, and even speak it sometimes ; they reveal the secret sins of the school children, etc. ; sometimes they are lifted off the ground in spite of the Sisters holding them ; a few days before, whilst the Sisters were holding Germana, she shouted 'I am on fire.' The Sisters withdrew and saw the girl's dress ablaze. Another time her bed began to burn also, though there was no fire near by, and so on.

"It was getting very serious, and the poor Sisters, weary of this terrible life, begged me to help them. After all this I thought it was my duty to begin the solemn exorcisms. I ordered, therefore, the four priests and three Sisters to be ready to begin at 2 p. m. in the Sisters' Choir, and excluded every one else from the Church. Just before the time I had the Holy Water font emptied and filled with plain water, whilst I took a small bottle of Holy Water in my pocket. Then I put on the rochet and mozetta and waited for Germana.

"The sisters brought her into the chapel and I sprinkled her at once with water *from the font*. At first she looked up with a slight shudder, but as I continued she laughed mockingly and cried: 'You may go on; this is not Holy Water!' Then I took the bottle out of my pocket and sprinkled her anew, but this time she shrieked and cried, and asked me to stop.

"Now I must remark that *all the time while the ordeal lasted I spoke Latin only*, the girl obeying all my orders and answering me, usually in Zulu but sometimes in Latin.

"After some prayers I asked her: 'Dic mihi nomen tuum.' I insisted and she said: 'I know your name, it is Henry; but where did you see that spirits have names?' 'They have, and I command you to tell me yours.' 'Never, never.' But on my placing on her head a relic of the true cross, which she could not see, 'Take that away,' she cried, 'it crushes me.' 'What is it?' 'A relic.' 'Then now tell me your name.' 'I cannot; but I will spell it: D-i-o-a-r.' 'Now, who is your master?' 'I have none.' 'But you have one, and must tell me his name.' 'I cannot, but I shall write it.' And she wrote with her finger: 'Lucifer.'

"'Now,' I said, 'tell me why you were cast out from Heaven.' 'Because God showed us His Son made man, and commanded us to adore Him; but we would not, because He had taken to Himself an inferior nature!'

"Whilst I was going on with the prayers of the ritual, she (should I not say *he*? however, you understand) interrupted me constantly, objecting to all the invocations. When I read extracts from the Gospels, she suddenly exclaimed: 'I know Matthew, I do not know Mark.' 'This is an untruth, and to make up for it kneel down at once.' This she did. Whilst we recited the Magnificat, she interrupted

again: 'Stop it, I know it better than you; I knew it long before you were born.'

"As one of the Fathers commanded her to be quiet, she turned on him: 'You fool! Who gave you authority over me? Did the Bishop or Abbott delegate you?'

"At times she remained quiet and disdainful, but sometimes she raged and gnashed her teeth. 'I'll make you sweat before I get out,' she said once: then all of a sudden, she asked to be allowed to go into another girl, Anastasia. 'Stop your prayers,' she said also, 'they hurt me. If you stop, I shall go out tomorrow morning.'

"Time went on, and as I was tired, I commissioned one of the priests to read the prayers for me. He did so, but with a droning voice. As he stopped at the end of a paragraph, she turned fiercely upon him: 'Exi immunde spiritus,' she said.

"From time to time she went into awful fits of roaring. On such occasions, I had only to place two fingers lightly on her throat, and she could not utter a sound. To make a counter-experiment, I asked one of the Sisters to do the same as I did, but it had no effect. 'Tell me,' I said, 'why you are so much afraid of the priest's fingers?' 'Because they are consecrated,' she answered, and she made the motion of the bishop anointing the priest's hands at his ordination. We went on thus from 2 p. m. till 9 p. m., when I decided to stop till the following morning.



"Afterwards, Germana was somewhat quieter, and she came begging me not to give her up. 'I am sure,' she said, 'that if you said your Mass for me tomorrow it would be easier.' 'Yes,' I answered, 'I shall, but on condition that you will go to confession and communion tomorrow morning.'

"The night was awful, and the poor Sisters had to remain with her all through. She went to confession and communion in the morning, and remained quiet until at 8:30 a. m. we began the exorcisms again. From the very first words, she became unmanageable, and we had to tie her hands and feet, since eight of us together could not control her.

" 'You have sent away Anastasia,' she cried; 'I can see her with another girl on their way to another mission, but I'll find her again.' It was true. Early in the morning I had sent her away, but Germana could not possibly have known it. After a whole hour, someone called a priest away; he came back half an hour later. 'Where has he been?' I asked. 'He went to baptize a man who got sick suddenly.' That was also true, but nobody in the chapel knew of it. Then she asked for a drink, and one of us fetched her a cup of water. After drinking some of it, she stopped: 'Wretched man,' she said, 'you gave me Holy Water!' Still, I made her drink the whole of it, and she became quite defiant. 'All right, give me more still; it will not make me suffer more than I do.'

"It would be too long to repeat everything she said. Suffice it to say that every moment it became more and more awful, until at last she tried to bite a priest. He, somewhat excited, gave her a little tap on the mouth, at which she became worse and called him the most stupid of men, who wanted to strike a spirit.

"As I commanded her to keep quiet, she cried 'Now, no more obedience.' It was the end evidently, but the struggle was terrible. At last she fell to the floor, and moaned with awful pains. Her face swelled up suddenly, so that she could not even open her eyes, and the tears came down her cheeks. But the sign of the cross brought the face instantly back to the natural size. Then a kind of convulsion and she remained motionless as if dead. After about ten minutes, she opened her eyes, and knelt down to thank God. 'Dioar' had gone.

"This is the summary of what happened to Germana. If anyone can explain the signs, the symptoms, the words and the cure otherwise than by possession, he will be more clever than I am. I shall perhaps relate some other time the case of Monica, and in the meantime I give the editor of "Rome" leave to do with this what he likes. I have in my possession a letter sent me by Germana afterwards, in which she begs that I will pray for her death. She has seen too much and is afraid of life."

Here we have a good example of possession. One does not have to be a scientific observer to

discover that there is a wide difference between the condition of the medium and the condition of the victim attacked by the Devil. A medium has visions, most often fair and pleasing; she willingly goes into a trance, and is thrilled with her accomplishment; sometimes she reaches a state of ecstasy. It is true that a medium's efforts may result in fatigue or nervous exhaustion. But the consequences are seldom very serious. There is seldom any sign of acute suffering, seldom any mark of torture, any fierce contortions and writhings, such as accompany the usual cases of possession. There may be some slight facial changes, some low moaning, but seldom more. I do not say that the devil may not have resorted to a new manner of physical interference with a human being. But I do say that such possession is not of the kind which the Church describes in the Ritual and of which we have many examples in the history of the Church.

That the devil, using his preternatural powers, has acted on the body of man is true. That the devil still can do so, is also true. It is clear, accordingly, that the diabolical theory has a good foundation in fact. Its advocates argue that possession, as we have known it, is inflicted on the victim without his will, and hence there is reason to believe that the devil consents to act with those

who directly or indirectly call upon him. Furthermore, since there is no adequate natural theory to explain the phenomena, as they allege, the causes of these phenomena must be attributed to some preternatural power; but, as the effect is bad, it cannot be that the angels are the agents. Therefore it must be the devil. And this conclusion is borne out by the testimony of the "spirits" themselves, who sometimes assert that they are Satan or his minions.

I state the main argument or arguments in favor of this theory. I must, however, remark that some of the reasoning is a little specious. For, to begin with, there is no reason why, if some physical phenomena at present appear inexplicable, that we therefore should seek for preternatural causes. Because we cannot explain the phenomena of wireless telegraphy is no argument that we should go in quest of preternatural powers for that explanation. Indeed, today no one does. But it was not so long ago that many when told that messages could be sent for miles without any sensible means of communication immediately declared that such was impossible, or if possible, was the work of the devil. History has shown that when any phenomena occur, novel to our experience but still in the range of physical powers, it is better to await a natural explanation than to

jump to a preternatural one. The multiplication of loaves is outside of nature's power; substantially it is contrary to nature's laws. The lifting of a table, however, is common to human experience. When the table is lifted by an invisible agency the phenomenon itself is substantially the same; the difference lies only in the manner or method of lifting it.

While Satan may or may not be the physical cause of psychical phenomena, he may be said to be the moral cause of the evil effect. He may not always be, it is true, for man in his fallen state can accomplish ill by himself, without voluntarily allying himself with the devil. Voltaire's works may be in great measure diabolical, but it does not follow that his works were written by the devil.

If the advocates of the diabolical theory would, in explaining physical cause or moral cause of spiritistic phenomena, confine themselves to a particular case, much more progress could be made in a discussion of the theory. They do not offer concrete, well-authenticated cases, nor do they point out clearly the details of such cases as lead them to attribute the cause to the devil. They usually argue in generalizations, speaking of "so many cases recorded by authorities like Sir Conan Doyle, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Crookes, and many others," all of whose names seem some-

how or other to have made a very deep impression on them. These advocates are ready to discover a case of possession in almost every medium. Far different is the attitude of Professor Flournoy, a believer in *spiritualism*, not *spiritism* ("Spiritism and Psychology," 1911, Chap. VIII), who could find nothing in favor of any preternatural explanation in the demonstrations of one of the most amazing mediums the modern world has seen. ("From India to the Planet Mars.") If the advocates of the diabolical theory would follow the example of the Church in the examination of miracles, and show us in this or that case sufficient proofs in favor of the preternatural, there would be no difficulty at all in admitting a diabolical explanation. It is an altogether different process to offer sundry unfounded generalizations to support a greater generalization,—that is, to declare that Spiritism as spiritists consider it, is directly the work of the devil. The Church does not declare every extraordinary event a miracle; nor is it common sense to declare every extraordinary psychical phenomenon the work of a preternatural agent.

The argument that offers the testimony of the "spirits" who declare that they are Satan or his servants is a two-bladed one, for if such testimony is to be considered, one must also put credence in



the testimony of the other "spirits" who insist that they are the souls of the dead.

I may sum up this chapter in a very few words: the diabolical explanation for this or that particular well-authenticated case may be more than probable; but as a general explanation of *all* real psychical phenomena it is but a theory, and a theory which thus far has not been very well established.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE NATURAL THEORY

THE greater number of the theories evolved to give a natural explanation of psychical phenomena demand little consideration here, because they are mainly concerned with the *force* and not with the *mind* behind the message or controlling the force. As it is only by discovering the real source of these messages, only by locating the other mind behind the force, that anything definite can be obtained for or against the existence and significance of psychical phenomena, the theories which deal mainly with the force are of little value. Indeed, the only theory deserving much investigation in a cursory examination such as this, is the telepathic theory, the theory that supposes that the human mind has the power here on earth of communicating with and to some extent controlling other human minds. Telepathic phenomena exist, as is well known.

I, for one, think that the real solution of psychical phenomena will be found in the study of telepathy, possibly within a few years, since more

attention is being paid to this unusual activity of the mind. However, in passing, I will mention a few of the natural theories offered to explain the strange phenomena gathered under the name of "psychic" during the last few decades. Some of these theories are out of vogue, and others are swiftly heading to the oblivion which they deserve.

Sir William Crookes is the supposed author of the theory of psychic forces which held that the medium was capable of certain vital emanations which were productive of various phenomena. The theory is occupied mostly with an explanation of the force and neglects the mind behind it. Besides, it is simply an exposition of certain faculties which it is well known some mediums possess. An amplification of this theory, the theory of psychical radiations, was proposed by Mr. L. Denis at the International Congress of Psychology at Paris in 1900. It holds that radiations from the medium, similar to Hertzian waves, are what cause levitation and similar phenomena. The theory of Dr. Crawford, before mentioned, is particularly interesting, declaring, as it does, that out of the medium projects a "rod" of a peculiar nature. This rod is composed of a series of tubes which are filled with some sort of ethereal matter, which makes the rod rigid and

thus enables the medium to levitate a table, produce raps, etc. These theories likewise are concerned only with the force. The theory of Gorres that the medium's thoughts can work at a distance as does the wireless transmitter, is a variation of the telepathic theory.

The most popular theory, and one that has occasioned much humor even in its serious presentation, is that of the "astral body." The astral body is a sort of third body, ethereal, and existing between the physical body and the soul. It is said to possess the form of the material body and unites it to the soul. The explanation of Grasset may be taken as characteristic. "In the same manner (*"L'Occultisme d'Hier,"* Chap. VIII) that the carbonate of soda unites two things so different as oil and water to produce soap that is a homogeneous substance, so the astral body unites the spiritual oil with the material water making a vital soap." This astral body, they claim, may radiate out of the material body and produce the luminous or dynamic effects commonly observed in psychical phenomena. At death we keep this astral body. Animals likewise possess an astral body, and accordingly, Mr. Encause, also known as Papus, in *"Echo du Merveilleux"* (Denis), p. 400, declares that "the mould of a dog's body after the sufferings of a terrestrial



THE GHOSTLY HAND WHICH APPEARED ON THE NEW YORK  
PHOTOGRAPHER'S CAREFULLY GUARDED PLATE.

(SEE APPENDIX IV)





incarnation is transformed into the mould or astral body of a future monkey . . .” Sir Oliver Lodge tells us in his famous book, “Raymond,” how the astral body suffers as does our body, and when the material body is blown to pieces or burnt, the astral body is also in pain.

“He says my body’s very similar to the one I had before. I pinch myself sometimes to see if it’s real, and it is, but it doesn’t seem to hurt as much as when I pinched the flesh body” (p. 194).

“Yes, yes, and eyelashes, and eyebrows, exactly the same, and a tongue and teeth. He has got a new tooth now in place of another one he had—one that wasn’t quite right then. He has got it right and a good tooth has come in the place of the one that had gone.”

“. . . when anybody’s blown to pieces, it takes some time for the spirit-body to complete itself, to gather itself all in, and to be complete . . .”

“Oh, if they get burnt by accident, if they know about it on this side, they detach the spirit first. What we call a spirit-doctor comes around and helps” (p. 195).

And so on. We shall have more of this when we come to a discussion of the Spiritistic theory.

The only natural theory that deserves serious consideration is, as I have said, the telepathic. It begins with the fact that one man’s mind can com-

municate with the mind of another. The power is similar to that displayed in hypnotic demonstrations. It is true that the telepathic theory is not concerned with the physical side of psychical phenomena. It does not explain, for instance, the force that tips a table. But it does endeavor to explain the mind that directs the force that tips the table, and that for a true solution of psychical phenomena is far more important. It admits that an outside mind can work, and declares that this outside mind is not necessarily the mind of departed soul or devil.

The foundation of the theory is very rational. Genuine cases of telepathy are known to science, as, for example, the mother who knows that her son has been killed though that son may be miles away. It likens minds to wireless transmitters and receivers. Some minds can send messages; some minds are better at receiving them. Some minds are tuned only for certain kinds of messages; some, for others. It explains much of the famous cross-correspondence, in which two or three or more mediums widely separated communicate apparently incoherent messages which, when put together, make a coherent whole. According to the telepathic theory, some mind sends forth the quotation as some wireless station sends forth a message. Parts of it are tuned for some

minds, parts for others. Each mind receives what it is equipped to receive. And when the various disconnected parts are put together, the quotation is found to be in its original form as sent out in the first case. The telepathic theory brings out as an analogy how a man with hypnotic power can influence another mind. And it insists on the delicacy, the incredible sensitiveness, the vast resources of that as yet unexplored ocean—the subconscious mind.

How then would this natural theory be applied to explain our two typical cases? In the first case in which the medium gives a message purporting to have come from the sitter's aunt, it is simply a case of mind reading by the medium. The subconscious mind of the sitter is the "other mind" in the problem. In that subconscious mind is buried the memory of the day when he fell off the tree and told his aunt. Through some abnormal sensitiveness the subconscious mind of the medium becomes aware of this impression and communicates it back. In the second case, the mind of the dying man thinks of his son, of his former home, and the message is caught by the mind of the medium as by wireless antennae. The thoughts of the dying man may be more pointed because of his condition, in which case the "radiations" would be stronger and more easily inter-

cepted. It is true that in this hypothetical case telepathy has not a ready explanation of how the medium knew the man's appearance, etc., but it would maintain that some form of clairvoyance may have accompanied the medium's reception of the dying man's thoughts. At any rate, the theory holds that in the receiving of these details there is nothing that points conclusively to either a diabolical or a spiritistic agency, and excluding both, it would seem that the natural theory offers the most probable explanation.

This theory may have the correct explanation for psychical phenomena. On the other hand, it may not. Time and the accumulated evidence and continued research that time allows, will some day tell. It is only a theory. But it is in its infancy, as is all psychology that now studies the abnormal mind. It has some probability to back it. And its studies are but started on the road that leads to a future, dim as yet but promising. It is not too much for one to say that here perhaps, in telepathy or in some allied study, may lie the solution of the problem that vexes the blurred vision of today; here may lie the explanation of much that is baffling in psychical phenomena. We, at least, can say that it affords us an explanation of the typical cases which we presented.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SPIRITISTIC THEORY

THE "Spiritistic Theory" is what its name implies—the theory that the outside mind active in psychical phenomena is the mind of a discarnate spirit.

It provides a very simple explanation of our typical cases. In the first instance, that of the fall from the tree, the *other mind* which provides the information is the disembodied, the discarnate soul of the sitter's aunt. In the case of the man killed in Melbourne, the other mind is the discarnate soul of Thomas Queen. These discarnate souls have power to levitate tables and produce raps and similar phenomena. They know the past and the present. As Sir Conan Doyle says ("The New Revelation," p. 75): "It may be remarked in passing that these and other examples show clearly either that the spirits have use of an excellent reference library or else that they have memories which produce something like omniscience."

The spiritistic theory is of universal application, for it can explain all cases. It does not ex-

clude natural theories, for these theories merely explain the methods employed by the spirits in their relations with men on earth. Nor does it reject the diabolical theory, for it admits that at times devils may take the place of the discarnate souls, as these souls themselves confess. This theory, it is declared, has come as a balm to a weary world, as an inspiration to a blind people, to give new ideals to many long grown materialistic. It comes, its advocates proclaim, to afford at last a *proof* of the immortality of the soul and the certainty of a future life.

The statement of this theory giving, as it does, a wide range and radiant subject for the human imagination, is much more pleasant and more easily swallowed whole than taken bit by bit in the logical propositions of a sound proof, not coated by any imagination. There is little wonder that so many have swallowed Spiritism, for it has a sugar coating. Much ado has been made about so little because it came in the guise of "absolute evidence." If its advocates had worked harder to display the rock bottom on which the "evidence" rested, if there had been more logic and real science, and less enthusiastic acceptance of face values, the theory would have attracted less attention, made less noise and achieved less prestige. As it happened the stories of wondrous phe-



nomena, startling messages, new teaching, all were immediately and seriously heeded by thousands, opponents and advocates alike.

The brief treatment of this book has aimed to show how little there is at the bottom, how few genuine psychical phenomena, after fraud and natural explanations, humbug and misinterpretations have been eliminated, really exist. Every human asset conducive to success attended the birth of Spiritism. The credulousness of mankind, its desire to be deceived, the strangeness of the new belief, the craving of scientists and pseudo-scientists for more scientific proofs of immortality, the crudeness of modern psychology, the prevalent loose-thinking, the ready newspaper advertising, all offered a helping hand.

And what is underneath? What are the foundation-stones of this bizarre mansion that has sprung into existence overnight? Simply this: "the word of the spirits." And how does one know that those who deliver the message are spirits? Because they themselves say so. And why does one believe what they say? Because they are spirits. And so on, to exhaustion. As no one now on earth in a human body has visited the land of the dead, who can verify the messages purported to come from there? There has never been a message upon which any disinterested and

judicious man could put his finger and honestly say: That message comes only from the soul of the dead. But, objects the Spiritist, I have received messages describing the land of the dead. Ask him how he knows that the description is veracious and not simply the product of some human imagination, and he cannot reply. But, he objects again, these messages have told me things about this world that only the spirit of someone dead could know. The fact is that the subject of the message is bounded by the earth. Ask him why he concludes that only the soul of the dead can know it, how he is sure that some abnormally sensitive mind on earth may not have received impressions of the same thing and communicated it to another mind, and he can give no convincing reply.

How does any man know that it is a discarnate spirit that gives the message? Obviously the usual explanation that the spirit itself says so, is ridiculous. But, it is argued, if it is not a spirit, what is it, who is it? It must be a discarnate spirit for it cannot be anyone else. They ignore the convincing body of evidence that it can be someone else,—someone communicating the message through fraudulent means, or someone employing an unusual power of the subconscious mind. In a dream I may imagine myself the King

of England and speak as if I were that King. The medium may do the same thing in a trance. A man will do the same thing while hypnotized. The medium in a trance may speak as Charlemagne or Shakespeare, but that does not mean that Charlemagne or Shakespeare is talking. Still, says the Spiritist, there are messages which have to do with our daily lives, with the small things as well as the great, that are beyond the knowledge of the mind of the medium. Yes, one may reply, those are the messages that constitute real psychical phenomena. Such were the messages given in our typical examples, and such messages may be explained by telepathy. Only in the source and significance of the message can we expect to find a scientific basis for Spiritism. Yet, that these messages come from another, an outside mind, is proved in very few cases, if it is proved decisively at all. And in these very few cases the assumption that the other mind is the mind of a discarnate spirit, has no foundation at all. We early distinguished between the force and the mind directing the force. We showed that the whole matter turns on the other mind. And when we examine the evidence in favor of this other mind being a discarnate spirit, as Spiritists allege, we find that there is no evidence that is in any way convincing.

Spiritists persist in pointing out the table-tipping, the raps, etc., saying: "Behold, here is the evidence." And again we say—the force considered alone, the physical side of the phenomena distinct from the mind involved, proves nothing except that there are certain vagaries of nature of which we know practically nothing, and such a conclusion, I feel sure, would surprise no one. That certain material phenomena without any intellectual significance are strange and mystifying, proves only that they are, thus far at least, beyond our knowledge.

But why,—one cannot refrain from asking the advocates of Spiritism,—why do not the spirits use direct means of communication, do their own writing and speaking instead of employing a medium as a phonetic organ or a writing instrument? Why must they resort to such a suspicious and wasteful intermediary method? Because they cannot communicate without the medium, is the answer. Consider, however, did not the spirits in the famous experiment of Sir William Crookes play an accordion one end of which was held by D. D. Home? Were not the keys seen to move under the power of invisible fingers? Has not Dr. Crawford shown that (in the presence of a medium) the spirits have rung an electric bell ("Reality of Psychic Phenomena," p. 94); that

they have also (in the presence of a medium) struck typewriter keys (*ib.*, p. 201); and have they not (in the presence of a medium) made marks with a pencil on a piece of paper? ("Experiments in Psychical Science," p. 103.) Is it not also proclaimed that the spirits have moved heavy furniture without the *physical* contact of the medium, that they have made marks without using the hand of the medium? Then, let me ask, why do they not do these things without the presence of the medium? Or, even permitting the presence of the medium, if spirits can make marks with a pencil and strike typewriter keys, why do they not use these powers to write intelligible, coherent messages without employing the hand or physical power of the medium? But they do not. And I for one cannot help believing that there are no spirits in the matter at all. A disinterested study would show that there is altogether "too much medium."

At this point it will not be out of place to remark how curious it is that the souls of enthusiastic spiritists maintain a strange and unexpected silence, when they have departed to the world beyond. Messages have been reported to have come from dead spiritists, but these messages have had little to justify any credence in them, or have contained information traceable to an acquaintance-

ship with the person while on earth, or, at least, to his influence while here. Clodd quotes an interesting letter from the family of F. W. H. Myers, the famous spiritistic enthusiast. ("The Question," p. 220, 221):

"To the Editor of *The Morning Post*:

"Sir: For some time papers and periodicals have been drawing the attention of the public to various spiritualistic messages purporting to come from my husband, the late F. W. H. Myers. My son and I wish to state, in reply to many inquiries we have received, that after a very careful study of all the messages, we have found nothing which we can consider of the smallest evidential value. Yours, etc.,

"Eveleen Myers."

Clodd then goes on to remark:

"Surely wife and children would be the first to have messages from their beloved one. Added to this there is the well-known, damning fact that cannot be too widely known, how Myers left behind him, in the care of the Society for Psychical Research, a sealed letter written in 1891, the contents of which Mrs. Verrall as medium, believed that she could reveal. When the seal was broken on the 13th of December, 1904, three years after his death, there was found to be no resemblance between the contents of the letter and Mrs. Verrall's automatic script which purported to contain a



communication from the disincarnate Myers. Sir Oliver suggested that Myers may have forgotten what he had written in the envelope: as if he could have forgotten that which, at his own initiative, was to be the crucial test of the survival of his personality."

The spiritgrams that come to different mediums uncontrolled by the observer, i.e., not under strict surveillance, may bring unusual and sometimes startling information, as sometimes happens in our dreams. But when it is a question of obtaining definite results, of discovering information which we are sure cannot be communicated to the medium by telepathic or other natural means, the test fails; or if there are some results obtained they are of a nature so ambiguous and unsatisfactory as to mean nothing. This man or that may be convinced of the reality of a spiritistic communication, but such is merely subjective certitude, which certitude can be given by fraud or ordinary wizardry. But to furnish us with objective proofs of communication of the dead with the living, through mediums, is a different undertaking and one that awaits the labor of the spiritists if they are to demand attention and credence from the more sensible inhabitants of this credulous world. I have already written of our belief in *spontaneous* apparitions of the dead, but it is

yet to be proved that man has the power to communicate with them *at will*.

Non-Catholic writers, as Sir Conan Doyle, often confuse spontaneous phenomena with phenomena that are supposed to be incited by someone on earth. This distinction should not be forgotten. God may, in special cases, allow a soul to appear because of His Divine disposition. No Christian, however, who has any respect for God and His providence, would believe that He allows the souls of the blessed or the souls in purgatory to hover about the earth, ready at the summons of various mediums of dubious character, to join the frolic of a spiritistic séance, tipping tables, blowing trumpets, strumming on guitars, jangling tambourines, conversing on idiotic matters, communicating mere nonsense, and sometimes even uttering blasphemy. And as regards the Catholic idea of hell, it seems impossible that God would allow the *souls of the damned* to attend *at call* the orgies of the ordinary séance. God may allow the devil to act, for special reasons which we may not know, but to believe that God permits man *to call* the inhabitants of hell to earth as suits their passing whim or curiosity, seems so ridiculous as to be beyond probability. That this is not an apodictical reason, I admit, but it has a

solid foundation in Christian common sense. And this is one of the many reasons why the Church forbids our provoking communication with the souls of the dead.

## XV

### SPIRITISM AS A RELIGION

**S**PIRITISM, as a religion, is the religious system that is based upon the "Spiritistic Theory." It is the religious belief that the souls of the departed actually communicate with us through the instrumentality of some persons of a special sensitiveness called mediums. To a great extent the faith and morals of this belief are based upon these communications.

I need not delay long here to comment upon the peculiar attitude of the followers of this belief who grasp at every curious happening as evidence for their religion, and who speak and write and act as if there was a vast, accumulated and verified evidence which has placed their belief beyond any doubt. Anyone who has read these few pages with any thoughtfulness can easily see what a tremendous leap of the imagination must be taken, to link the spiritistic theory, feeble, vague, and uncertain as it is, with the cocksure doctrines of the spiritistic religious beliefs. Psychical phenomena, as we have seen, are at best too few

and too dubious to afford any ground for any ordinary beliefs much less for the intricate and fantastic doctrines of Spiritism.

The Spiritist presents his case in a way that is appealing to many. Methods of communication, he says, have improved with the centuries. The wireless telegraph and telephone which allow us to communicate with Asia and Europe in a short time,—how far have they surpassed the old methods that were simply travellers' tales, and based on faith in human testimony! Today we receive a wireless message telling us what happened a few hours ago in Asia; once we would have had to rely on a Marco Polo to tell us the incidents of years back. And just as modern methods of communication have improved upon the old, so Spiritism has surpassed the Catholic Church. No longer do men have to take the word of Christ or of the Church as to the fate of our souls after death. Now we call one from heaven or hell with the aid of a medium or a ouija board and all the information is supplied us.

Such is the presentation of the case. It is needless to remark that such a presentation is not true. If Spiritism could do what is claimed, it would be but a matter of months before millions would be enrolled under its banner. People may be

fooled, but no great number will be fooled for a great length of time.

Just what Spiritism is may be found in the following quotations. (Statistics of Religious Bodies, compiled by U. S. Gov., 1906, vol. II, p. 627; "Spiritualists, Their Declaration of Principles.")

"We believe in an Infinite Intelligence; and the phenomena of Nature, physical and spiritual, are the expressions of Infinite Intelligence.

"We affirm that a correct understanding of such expressions, and living in accordance with them, constitute the true religion."

The way to obtain the correct understanding is by communication with the dead who, of course, are supposed to know much more of the phenomena of nature than we. Accordingly, the whole foundation of Spiritism as a different religion is:

"that the existence and personal identity of the individual continue after the change called 'death,' and that communication with the so-called 'dead' is a fact scientifically proven by the phenomena of Spiritualism."

This declaration of principles has been printed on small cards and distributed among the believers. It is considered authentic, at least by the members of the National Spiritualists' Association of America. From this declaration we have



one thing as certain: that the Spiritists base all their religious beliefs on the *scientifically demonstrated fact* of the communication, by mediums, between the living and the dead. Yet, as we have seen, Spiritism is only an hypothesis. Such communication has *not* as yet been scientifically proven. No matter how fervent the belief of Spiritists, no matter how enthusiastic their declaration, Spiritism is and remains an hypothesis, an hypothesis which, as regards its foundation, may, if you wish, be reckoned as a probable explanation of a few psychical phenomena, and which, as regards its origin, is traced to the fraud of the Fox sisters. No scientist, however great, can declare Spiritism a scientific fact. This point, here and on every other occasion, cannot be stressed too much.

However, in order to discuss Spiritism with Spiritists, on their own basis, we will *admit for a few moments, the assumption* that it is not based on a theory, but on a scientific fact.

To communicate with Russia by wireless, we need an operator in Russia as well as here. So, according to Spiritism, to communicate with departed souls we need not only a medium in this world but also a "control" in the other. Says Sir William Barrett:

“ . . . it is well to note the meaning attached to the words ‘control’ and ‘communicator.’ By the former is meant the intelligence which is, or professed to be, in direct communication with the sitter through the voice, or writing of the medium. By ‘communicator’ is meant the intelligence for which the control acts as amanuensis or interpreter, or whose remarks or telepathic impress the control repeats to the sitter through the medium. This definition, given by Mrs. Sidgwick, is generally accepted. (“On the Threshold of the Unseen,” pp. 242, 243.)

We discussed how difficult it was to find a dependable medium, how hard it was to be sure of the results. Sir Conan Doyle, writing of Home, declared:

“It is to be remarked in the career of this entirely honest and unvenal medium that he had periods in his life when his powers deserted him completely, that he could foresee these lapses, and that, being honest and unvenal, he simply abstained from all attempts until the power returned. It is this intermittent character of the gift which is, in my opinion, responsible for cases when a medium who has passed the most rigid tests upon certain occasions, is afterwards detected in simulating, very clumsily, the results which he had once successfully accomplished. The real power having failed, he has not the moral courage to admit it, nor the self-denial to forego his fee which he endeavours to earn by a travesty of what was once genuine.

Such an explanation would cover some facts which otherwise are hard to reconcile. We must also admit that some mediums are extremely irresponsible and feather-headed people." ("The Vital Message," pp. 40, 41.)

First, then, is the great difficulty of finding a dependable medium who does not, consciously or unconsciously, employ his or her own wits, but reproduces the message as far as possible in accordance with the communication of the control. Suppose we have found such a medium, and are able, in some way or other, *to be sure* of this honesty and dependability. Then, the difficulty presents itself of determining the honesty and reliability of our control—no easy task, as you may imagine. How are we going to do this? I, for one, cannot answer. I have no influence with these modern operators of the other world. I do not know. Sir Conan Doyle quotes a General Drayson on this subject:

"The truth is that every spirit in the flesh passes over to the next world exactly as it is, with no change whatever. This world is full of weak or foolish people. So is the next. You need not mix with them, any more than you do in this world. One chooses one's companions. But suppose a man in this world, who had lived in his house alone and never mixed with his fellows, was at last to put his head out of the win-

dow to see what sort of place it was, what would happen? Some naughty boy would probably say something rude. . . In a mixed séance, with no definite aim, you have thrust your head into the next world and you have met some naughty boys." ("The New Revelation," p. 21, 22.)

"Good as well as mischievous agencies doubtless exist in the unseen," says Sir William Barrett ("On the Threshold of the Unseen," p. 250). "This, of course, is equally true if the phenomena are due to those who have once lived on the earth. 'There are as great fools in the spirit world as there ever were in this,' as Henry More said over 200 years ago."

These "naughty boys," these jesters of the spirit world, appear very often in spiritistic communications, and some of them have achieved more fame than if they had acted in seriousness, as for example, the famous John King, who controlled Eusapia Palladino; the no less famous Phinuit, for so many years the control of Mrs. Piper, and finally the well-known Feda, who controlled Mrs. Leonard and furnished Sir Oliver with the information for his enjoyable "Raymond." I cannot resist quoting a few words from one of Feda's communications to good Sir Oliver:

"A chap came over here the other day, and *would* have a cigar. 'That's finished them,' he

thought. He means he thought they would never be able to provide that. But there are laboratories over here, and they manufacture all sorts of things in them. Not like you do, out of solid matter, but out of essences, and ethers and gases. It's not the same as on the earth plane, but they were able to manufacture what looked like a cigar. He didn't try one himself, because he didn't care to; you know he wouldn't want to. But the other chap jumped at it. But when he began to smoke it, he didn't think so much of it; he had four altogether, and now he doesn't look at one. They don't seem to get the same satisfaction out of it, so gradually it seems to drop from them. But when they first come they want to do things. Some want meat, and some strong drink; they call for whisky sodas. Don't think I'm stretching it, when I tell you that they can manufacture even that. But when they have had one or two, they don't seem to want it so much—not those who are near here. He has heard of drunkards who want it for months and years over here, but he hasn't seen any."

Professor Flournoy summarizes the situation very ably when he says:

"What stands out more clearly than anything else in the preceding argument concerning the authenticity of the mediumistic messages and the true identity of their senders is the startling contrast which exists upon this point between

the judgment of savants who are familiar with the question and the current opinion of the ordinary spiritistic circles.

“For these latter nothing is more easy or more common than to converse with the departed. It is sufficient for a medium to obtain responses through a table or by means of a pencil, and, setting aside the risk of meeting with deceiving spirits (for there are dishonest people in the other world as there are here, we are told), there is no reason to doubt that the usual communications proceed from the source from which they purport to proceed. For the specialists of the Society for Psychical Research, on the contrary—even if they are spiritistic in conviction, like Hodgson or Hyslop—nothing is more rare than to find a true medium, and more difficult than to distinguish the authentic from what is not authentic, in their messages. For the best mediums constantly mix their dreams and their subliminal reveries with what comes to them from the Beyond, without speaking of perturbations due to the influence of the living; and with the disincarnate themselves it seems that there are such difficulties to overcome in order to communicate with us that we can never be sure of the verbal correctness of any of the messages received.

“Hodgson compared the communication which he held with the deceased through the channel of the medium (Mrs. Piper) to the conversations which might take place in this world



between two persons widely separated from each other, who are compelled to exchange their messages by means of two messengers, both of them drunk. . . . But if this be so in the case of the most powerful medium of our generation, and of a deceased person who had given his life to the solution of this problem and had resolved to do everything possible after his death to manifest himself to us, what ought it to be in ordinary cases? And how completely duped are those mediums, professional and amateurs, who imagine that they are the recipients of communications freely coming from innumerable 'spirits' on the other side!" ("Spiritism and Psychology," p. 183-185.)

But suppose we have found an absolutely dependable medium, and suppose, also, we have obtained and identified beyond doubt an absolutely dependable control; admitting the possibility of this almost impossibility, let us see, if we can, in any way, be sure of the third agency, the "communicator," the one who, using the control as an operator, communicates with us in this world.

First of all, according to spiritistic revelations, there are different planes and spheres in the next world, and the spirits know little outside of their own plane or sphere. They pray and die in one sphere before entering another. ("The New Revelation," p. 25.) Furthermore, duration of life in

the next sphere is shorter than on earth. (Ib., p. 27.) For spirits to communicate between one plane and another, they need mediums and controls *in each plane* to act as spiritual relays. The difficulties then, of communicating between the planes, are obvious. "Communications usually come from those who have not long passed over, and tend to grow fainter, as one would expect." "The cases of spirits who give good proofs of authenticity and yet have passed some time are not common."

The greater number of communications come from the first plane. On this plane, as regards their knowledge, the spirits are like recently-born babies, or at the most, like children. Are we going to put any faith in the accuracy of their testimony? At best our information would be a very vague and inconsequent hodge-podge—such as was witnessed in our quotations from Raymond's communications through Feda. But, says Sir Conan Doyle:

"If one of us were suddenly called up by the denizen of some sub-human world, and were asked to explain exactly what gravity is, or what magnetism is, how helpless we should be! We may put ourselves in the position, then, of a young engineer soldier like Raymond Lodge, who tries to give some theory of matter in the

beyond—a theory which is very likely contradicted by some other spirit who is also guessing at things above him. He may be right, or he may be wrong, but he is doing his best to say what he thinks, as we should do in a similar case.” (“The New Revelation,” pp. 78, 79.)

Quite true—but it only goes to prove how unsatisfactory is such a source of belief. Where, for instance, are we to get any reliable knowledge concerning this religion of ours and just what are we to believe?

“The entities behind my experimental circles have shown themselves by their acts to be essentially human beings; and in this respect they conform to the general rules all over the world.” (“Hints and Observations,” Dr. Crawford, p. 9.) And, if this is so, then we may say as Sir Conan Doyle said, speaking of automatic writing: “. . . you are at one end of the telephone, if one may use such a simile, and you have no assurance as to who is at the other end.” (“The Vital Message,” p. 46.)

How, then, is anyone to be certain of anything? If one spirit says there is no hell and another says there is, which is to be believed? If one says you have to be good to be happy in the next world, and another says it is a matter of choice, who is to be followed? There are so many opportunities for

believing that the medium may be dishonest, or the control, or the communicator, or all three, or that one of them or all may be mischievous, or confused, or misinformed, that it is practically impossible to obtain even one message that could in any honest consideration be held reliable.

And if such is the case how is one to build up a religion, how is one to discover rules for living, how is one to know what to believe and what not to believe? The answer is too stupendous for me. And this utter uncertainty presents itself even after we have admitted for the sake of clarity, that discarnate spirits do communicate with us through mediums—which admission is most dubious of all.

To trust the testimony of any person, you need: 1, to be morally certain that the person telling you the fact is telling you the truth as far as he knows it; and 2, that such person knows what he is talking about. According to the admissions of the Spiritists themselves, as we have quoted, it is almost impossible to be certain of the identity of the spirit who is communicating with you, and if you are not certain of his or her identity, you cannot be certain of his or her truthfulness. But, admitting that you are certain of the identity and truthfulness of the spirit communicating, it is impossible—for you know nothing about it—to

be sure that he knows what he is talking about. (See quotation above from Doyle's "The New Revelation," p. 78, 79.) And even if both these necessary conditions were positively established, how is anyone to know that "the line of communication" is trustworthy and unhampered? All these questions should be answered before Spiritism even *begins* to have a foundation as a religion. Many have been having their knowing laugh at the faith of Catholics. Spiritists look at it as an illusion that is passing in the penetrating light of their beliefs. But the Spiritist believes far more than the Catholic, and he believes it with infinitely less foundation. And the faith of Catholics is not only well-established, but it is reasonable, and has endured the test of twenty centuries.

Another quotation from Professor Flournoy is apposite:

"I fear . . . for mediums and practical spiritists that, when their hypothesis shall have been scientifically demonstrated, the result may be very different from that which they now imagine it to be. It might well happen that the cult of the table, automatic writing, séances, and all other mediumistic practices, may receive their death-blow from the official recognition of spirits by science. Suppose, in fact, that contemporary researches should at last have

proved clearly that messages actually come from the discarnate; it has already followed from the same researches that, in the most favorable cases, the veritable messages are very difficult to distinguish from those which are not authentic. When people come to understand that this sorting of messages is almost always beyond their power they will, perhaps, be put out of conceit with experiments in which they have ninety-nine chances against one of being duped, by themselves or others, and in which—a still more vexatious matter—if they should even be so fortunate as to light upon the hundredth chance, they would have no certain means of knowing it.

“We hardly see people seeking for gold in the sands of the Arve, though there is some there, nevertheless, because ‘the game is not worth the candle,’ and no one would care to move so much mud for the sake of seeing a problematical glitter at the end. . . . In like manner . . . it appears to me probable that spiritistic practices will lose more and more their charm in proportion to the extent to which science shows us the rarity of authentic messages, and the impossibility of recognizing them once received. But it is true that to children, paste will always produce the same illusion as veritable jewels.” (“Spiritism and Psychology,” p. 186, 187.)

In a word: If you admit the spiritistic hypothesis that communication with the souls of the



dead is possible through mediums, there is very little foundation for anything that even resembles a religion; and if you deny the hypothesis, there is none at all.

## CHAPTER XVI

### SPIRITISM AND MORALS

THE fact that at present we have no certain knowledge of the *real and universal cause* of psychical phenomena in no way affects the moral aspect of the question. Even if some day, in the future, it is discovered that the mind-part of these phenomena admits of a telepathic explanation and the force that produces the physical effect is of a natural origin, the situation now is what it is; future decisions do not change its present form.

I see a table moving under my fingers and suddenly rising unaided before me, and I am awe-struck. My mystification *at that moment* is no greater or less, if a half-hour later I am to be told that the table was levitated by an ordinary magician's trick, or by the spirits or devil, or simply by the control of some rare natural force.

Ordinarily attendance at séances, dealing, as they usually do, with the abnormal, has a tendency to disturb a man's normal balance. A man attends a séance deliberately to communicate with the souls of the dead, or to see if such communica-

tion is possible. Startling effects may be produced. He does not know the cause. Extraordinary explanations, the effects themselves, the general atmosphere of the séance, all tend to upset his ordinarily sound standards of judgment, and incline him to *superstitious beliefs and practices*. It is to prevent this *superstitious attitude* that the Church from the early ages has always forbidden any attempt to communicate with the dead. This can be seen in the declarations of the Fourth Council of Carthage, the Fifth Council of Constantinople, the Second of Tours, the Sixth of Paris, the First of Ancra, the Fourth, Fifth, Twelfth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth of Toledo, and many more.

In all these the practice of communicating with the dead is forbidden. Rome also has spoken. A question was proposed to the Holy Office, inquiring whether it was allowable to take part in spiritistic communications or manifestations of any kind, such as asking questions of souls of the dead and hearing their answers; or even to take part without any desire to communicate with the spirits. The Holy Office replied that all such practices were illicit. (Sac. Cong. S. Officii, 17 Apr., 1917.)

The Church, however, it must be remembered, *has not declared* that it is the *spirits*, nor yet *devils*, who communicate with us by the way of mediums.

A number of ecclesiastical writers maintain that the devil is the agent in many of the phenomena of Spiritism. (For a discussion of this, see "Spiritism and Religion," by Baron John Liljencrants, A.M., S.T.D.)

In the condemnation of immoral books the Church gives no specific reason for her course. She speaks with authority, and her credentials are sound. Thus also she forbids Catholics to consult with the dead, *in any way*. The Church knows best, and it is for Catholics to obey. There is a document of particular importance on this matter issued by an American Council, the Second Council of Baltimore (Title I c. VII n. 36):

"However it seems a well established fact that many of the wonderful phenomena which are said to be produced at Spiritistic Circles are either altogether fictitious, or are produced by a fraudulent conspiracy among the 'performers,' or are to be attributed to the imagination of persons called mediums, or to the credulity of the spectators, or finally, are to be ascribed to a certain sleight of hand such as magicians practise. However, it seems hardly to be doubted that certain things, at least, are due to Satanic intervention, since they can scarcely in any other way be satisfactorily explained."

*"Bene vero videtur esse exploratum, plura quae in Circulis Spiritismi exhiberi phaenomena miranda dicuntur, vel esse omnino e mentita et*

*operatorum inter se collusione fraudulenta producta, vel personarum quae dicuntur media imaginationi et spectatorum credulitati esse praesertim adscribenda, vel demum manuali cuidam dexteritati, qualis apud praestigiatores usu venit, esse tribuenda. Vix dubitandum tamen videtur, quaedam saltem ex eis a Satánico interventu esse repetenda, cum vix alio modo satis explicari possint."*

The Fathers of the Council, it should be noticed, do not declare that the devil is the agent. They say that "it seems hardly to be doubted," that is, you can doubt, though your doubt would be scarcely reasonable, that "certain things, at least," that is, some particular cases, *not every case*, "are due to Satanic intervention," and they give as a reason that they can scarcely be satisfactorily explained in any other way.

This statement of the Fathers is perhaps the best treatment of the various explanations of spiritistic phenomena that has yet appeared. It says in a few words what I am trying to say in these rather numerous pages. In replying to the many questions asked of Catholics in regard to Spiritism, one could do no better than to quote these words of the Fathers of Baltimore.

Spiritism today differs little from that superstition known for centuries as "divination" or "vain

observance." We constantly find the "evil spirit" seeking to ensnare men in various erroneous explanations of the Hereafter, so that, in the words of St. Thomas (2-2-q. 96), "being implicated in these observances, they may become more curious and get themselves more entangled in the manifold snares of pernicious error."

The practice of consulting the dead through sorcerers, necromancers, conjurors, and similar agencies ("mediums" of the past) is expressly condemned in Holy Writ. In Leviticus (xx:6) we read: "The soul that shall go aside after magicians, and soothsayers, . . . I will set my face against that soul, and destroy it out of the midst of its people." And the Sacred Book goes further than prohibition and malediction, saying: "Wizards thou shalt not suffer to live." (Exodus xxii:18.)

There are other reasons why a Catholic should avoid actively participating in the production of spiritistic phenomena. Apart from any moral consideration, such practices tend to cultivate over-emotionalism and lack of mental balance in the participator, as any similar practice would, whether connected with Spiritism or not. But besides this, these practices are a menace to health and bring on various nervous diseases. Says Sir William Barrett:



“ . . . there is certainly some evidence indicating that continual sittings for physical phenomena cause an illegitimate and excessive drain on the vitality of a medium, creating a nervous exhaustion which is apt to lead, in extreme cases, to mental derangement, or to an habitual resort to stimulants, with a no less deplorable end.” (“On the Threshold of the Unseen,” p. 261.)

And again, speaking of mediums, he says:

“The danger to the medium lies, in my opinion, not only in the loss of spiritual stamina, but in the possible deprivation of that birthright we each are given to cherish, our individuality, our true self-hood; just as in another way this may be impaired by sensuality, opium, or alcohol.” (Ib., 250, 251.)

If a Catholic admits the spiritistic hypothesis and ascribes the phenomena to discarnate spirits, since he cannot admit that these souls are souls from heaven or purgatory, he must admit that they are the souls of the damned. The results from any communication with these souls can be nothing but evil. The danger of even attempting such communication must be obvious. If a Catholic, on the other hand, believes that the agency of these phenomena is the devil, and still indulges in producing or assisting to produce them, he is simply perpetrating the slow suicide of his soul. Any intimacy with the practices of Spiritism, no

matter how we believe the phenomena to be produced, endangers our moral, physical, and religious health. It is probably an exaggeration to say, as some do, that those active in spiritistic practices become in time afflicted with insanity in some form or other, but it is no exaggeration to say that they pay the price in some fashion, spiritual or physical.<sup>1</sup>

When a mother hears that the people in a house nearby are afflicted with some contagious disease, she forbids her children to play near that house, or to associate with those in it. She is particularly strict in her prohibition if she sees that many of those who dwelt in the house or visited it, have been carried away in death. She may not be sure that there is some contagious disease lurking in that house. It may be only a rumor, utterly false or without foundation. Nevertheless, she insists that her loved ones keep away. She does so, not merely for her own sake, but for the sake of her children. Such, likewise, is the position of the Church, when she forbids her children to avoid spiritistic practices, when those practices "take the form of consultation with the dead." The Church is our mother. Her maternal eyes are keen to detect danger even afar off. She is ever

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Crawford, often quoted in this book, committed suicide a few months ago.

solicitous for the eternal welfare of her children. She knows that she is built on the rock and that the Gates of Hell will not prevail against her. She has the promise of Christ, her Founder, that heaven and earth will pass away, but not His word. And she has behind her the solid experience of twenty centuries. Not for her sake are her warnings on Spiritism, but for the sake of her children.

In baptism, Catholics promise to renounce the devil and all his works. Today, a Catholic cannot know if the devil is behind the phenomena of Spiritism. It seems probable that there is a diabolical agency behind some of them at least. Just how much that is, if it be the devil, no one can tell. When a Catholic without any sure knowledge of what are the causes of spiritistic phenomena, and with the probability that some of them are instigated by the devil, indulges in the practices of Spiritism, he breaks his promise, and plays traitor to God, to his Faith and to the Church.

## EPILOGUE

**D**URING the Spanish-American War, a Spaniard in a small South American city, anxious to follow all the details of the struggle, subscribed for scores of newspapers and reviews. Among these publications was one that published only accounts that were well-verified. These accounts, necessarily, were unfavorable to Spanish hopes, listing as they did the various triumphs of the Americans. The Spaniard was infuriated. He not only dropped his subscription to the publication, but he did all in his power to ruin it. At the same time, he did everything he could do to assist those papers and reviews which fabricated news favorable to the fortunes of Spain. He wanted news, true or false, well-founded or fanciful, that would cater to his own sentiments. He cared not if it was "faked." But it must be favorable.

This Spaniard reminds me often of those at present who are eager to obtain information from the other side of the grave. The Church of Christ has told us about the next world. Purgatory is

a place of suffering. Hell is infinitely more dreadful. And heaven is not the state men dream of, while under the thralldom of worldly passions and fancies. It is a joy, strange and distant, beyond the dim vision of our earthly eyes. But Spiritism reports otherwise; it offers to tell us all, down to the smallest details. It assures us that there is no hell. It informs us of our relatives and friends who have gone before us. It tells us of the amusements there,—very like our own, only more attractive. It gives us pleasant news and such as appeals to our weak human nature. It caters to our inclinations. It is favorable to our present desires. And for that reason, whether true or false, many subscribe to its tenets, as the Spaniard did to the paper crammed with his favorite prejudices. Not the teaching of the Catholic Church, but the teaching of Spiritism, say they, must be our guide, for our guide shall be the teaching we desire. It makes no difference to us that the credentials of Spiritism are the shaking of tables and strange noises, the clanging of tambourines and the strumming of guitars, words spoken in a dazed condition or in the rapture of semi-madness, ludicrous ghosts and the scraping of ouija. It makes no difference that most of our demonstrations are fraudulent, that the originators of our belief were confessed impostors, that many

of its apostles have been caught in deceit. It makes no difference, for Spiritism tells us what caters to our weaknesses. It tells us what we want to believe.

When St. John in prison heard of the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples to ask Him: "Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another?" And Jesus, making answer, said to them: "Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Matt. xi:2-5.) And so do our apostles of the New Revelation declare to those who come to them: "Go and tell others what you have seen in the séances. The tables totter, the chairs dance; and if you have not seen because of the darkness of the place, you have heard the accordions and trumpets and the strange raps; and you have found that the poor may pay and receive spiritgrams from the spirits of their beloved dead."

Christ walked out into the open under the sun of Galilee, followed by thousands who yearned, not for wonders, but for the words of eternal life. He saw that the multitude was hungry, but there were only a few small loaves and a few fishes at hand. There was not enough to feed them all. And there was not money among them to purchase



the needed supply, even if a market were near. So Christ, out in the fields, under the bright noon-day sun, took the few loaves and fishes, and blessing them, commanded His disciples to distribute them among the multitude. Lo, the loaves and fishes are multiplied in their hands, and eight thousand hungry followers are fed until their hunger is satisfied! There is no hallucination. They have been hungry and they are fed. And after the repast the remnants are gathered into baskets.

This was only one of the countless miracles of Christ. Gather all the wonders of Spiritism, all its levitations and materializations, all its rappings and obscure messages. Compare them with this one miracle of the Saviour! How mean, commonplace, and ludicrous, these so-called spiritistic marvels appear, in comparison!

It seems a pity for anyone to institute this comparison. The work seems one of desecration. Yet, there are some who would tell us—some Catholics even—that unless we admit the truth of the so-called phenomena of Spiritism, we shall overthrow the foundation of Christ's miracles. From such a declaration one of two things is clear: either those who say this have never known what a miracle is, or they do not know what the ordinary phenomena of Spiritism are. They assert that non-Catholics will not admit the miracles of the

Saviour unless we admit the miracles of Spiritism. This is not so. I have spent many pages explaining that there is a vast difference between the admission of a *fact* and the admission of some *explanation* of that fact. I shall not go over the subject now. Let those outside the Church think as they wish. . . . They will never understand our Faith unless they have the gift of Faith, as they will never understand him who speaks in another language unless they first know that language. We cannot forget that if we believe, it is because we have the gift of Faith, a gift that was given to us in Baptism, and has been constantly nourished by the grace of God and the Sacraments. And it is this Faith that affords us the beautiful explanations of the true Spiritual Life, and tells us of our spiritual relations with the living members of the Body of Christ, as well as with those who died in the state of grace.<sup>1</sup> We have much more than we need to satisfy the most anxious person about the future life, and if God in His wisdom has not given us more details about that life beyond the grave, it is because we cannot understand what "the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard." (I Cor. ii:9.)

In our mortal lives we must constantly trust the

<sup>1</sup>The author has in preparation another book entitled "True Spiritualism" that will appear soon.

authority and validity of human faith. Is it, not only convenient, but wise to trust Him who is Our Father, Him who knows what is beyond the grave, and admit His testimony without seeking to pry into what He, in His Divine and Merciful Providence, has hidden from our eyes? He may allow the souls of the dead to appear to us as suits His wisdom, as, we have seen, He has done before. For our part, let us not entertain any presumptuous desire for rending that veil which He has drawn before our vision. Such vain curiosity, if pushed too far, would be an insult to His loving Wisdom and endanger that Faith which is precious to us beyond any earthly possession. He is Our Father. As children we may trust Him. Under His care we shall not come to ruin.

If a real communication between the living and the dead were established there might be some reason for pardoning our curiosity. But no such method of communication exists. There may be some way for the devil to communicate with us, but certainly, there is no way of our conversing at will with the souls of the dead. The belief that they will come to us *at our summons*, is but the last straw clutched at by those who have no belief, and endeavor to console themselves by means as outlandish and feeble as those practiced at a séance. Those who have not the Faith may per-

suade themselves that therein lies their hope, as the Hindu, when dying, clutches at the tail of the Sacred Cow that it may draw him to Heaven. . . .

I, for one, if I had not the gift of Faith, would be very loath to place my confidence in a creed, the founders of which were tricksters, and the apostles of which have so associated their greed with their religion, that it often seems to be an inseparable part of it. I could not bring myself to aspire to a condition after death in which it would be my privilege to move furniture, produce raps, and engage in the other unbecoming and somewhat laughable activities of a séance. And if I did believe that I could communicate with the soul of some loved one by such means, I think that I would not. It would seem a desecration of their remains and an act against that eternal peace and happiness which I wished them so fervently and often.

For my part, I want, in the words of St. Paul to Timothy, to "fly these things, and pursue justice, piety, faith, charity, patience, meekness, and fight the good fight of faith, laying hold of eternal life, whereunto I was called." This I earnestly desire so that, when the great hour comes, after I have believed with all the strength of my intellect, worked with all the strength of my will, I may say: "I have fought a good fight, I have

finished my course, *I have kept the Faith*. For the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me at that day; and not only to me, but to them also, who love His coming." (II Tim. iv:6-8.)





## APPENDIX I

### HOW I BECAME A SPIRIT MEDIUM

This remarkable confession of deception is from "Revelations of a Spirit Medium," published in 1891, author unknown. It is said that the plates for the book were afterwards bought up and destroyed and many hundreds of copies burned by persons who did not want the book circulated.

**I**N the year 1871 I was a young man of seventeen years, and working at my chosen occupation in one of the capital cities of the middle States. I was a materialist of the most pronounced type. I did not *believe* anything, holding that what was truth could be demonstrated.

My family, with the exception of my father, were converts to Spiritualistic philosophy and phenomena, and were regular attendants at the séances of the three or four local mediums and the meetings held on Sunday by the organized society of Spiritualists of my city. My family at no time obtruded their views upon me, nor said anything in opposition to the ideas held by myself.

Not being given to airing my opinions in speech at any and all places and times, it came about that the members of my family had been numbered in

the fold of the Spiritualists for perhaps four years before my attention was sufficiently attracted to the subject to undertake an investigation of its peculiar claims. Knowing that the members of my family were possessed of ordinary intelligence and exhibited average powers of logical argument on questions other than religious or Spiritualistic, I concluded that either there was some fire beneath the smoke, or there were some clever artists engaged in the business. From the accounts of the phenomena occurring with and in the presence of their favorite medium, given me by my married sister, a lady with a liberal education and a cool, analytical mind, I was forced to the conclusion that those "kings of magic," Herrmann and Hellar, still had a few things to learn.

The first séance that I attended was one given in my native city by a man reputed so wonderful that I found it impossible not to go just once, anyway. That first séance changed the whole course of my then honorable life and led to a professional career of deception and adventure.

Had I never come in contact with other than finished, professional mediums, the chances are that I would not have become an adventurer. It finally struck me that, in order to make certain of the truth of the matter, it would be the proper thing to sit for the development of a "medium-

ship" of my own. I would use every endeavor to obtain some mediumistic gift, and if I succeeded, that would finally and indisputably settle the matter. If I did not succeed I would, of course, have the same uncertainty about it as before I attempted my development. It would cost nothing but a small portion of my time, and even if it was a failure there would be no loss.

Accordingly, after asking several mediums for the proper instructions until they were obtained, and I had been assured that if they were carefully observed there would be no such thing as failure, a cabinet was erected at my home and the attempt at development begun.

I began my "development" sittings in as handsome a cabinet, and with as good instruments as the purses of my friends, who would not allow me to go to any expense, would permit. Those who sat outside were spiritualists, six of them; all interested in seeing the prospective medium developed to the fullness of his capabilities, whatever they might be. They were friends of my family and I found the development business quite pleasant.

The sittings were kept up for the three months named as the time that the manifestations would begin, but none had put in appearance, neither had I experienced anything that led me to believe that

any progress had been made. I was abjured to be patient by the "sitters," who told me that it was an easy thing for the spirits to be mistaken as to the length of time required to bring about results, but that they were probably not *far* wrong, and possibly the next sitting would see the first of the manifestations.

Thus encouraged, I continued the sittings for six months. Nothing occurred, except a healthy desire on the part of both medium and sitters that the manifestations be forthcoming, giving me an inclination to cause some phenomena on my own hook. The more I thought about it the stronger became the desire to practice a little deception on my friends, then, after telling them about it, drop the matter entirely. After turning it over in my mind for some time, I concluded I would see what effect a few spurious manifestations would have upon my friends. It would be easy, they having unbounded confidence in me. My mind made up to do it, I hardly knew what to try, and finally concluded I would wait until the sitting came around and, after getting into the cabinet, see what suggested itself.

This was the course I pursued, and on one Saturday evening, after the first song had been sung, the sitters were delighted to hear sharp raps, seemingly on the walls of the room, within the

cabinet. Of course, I had to be happily surprised, or appear so, which I did, and my first act of deceit was done. I was forced to deny the authorship of the raps also, and the first lie had been given birth. The sitters endeavored to get replies to questions, but they did not succeed, for I did not care to go to that length with my deception and, besides, did not know what answers to make to the inquiries. Nothing occurred but the raps, although every ear and eye was alert to catch anything that might transpire. The sitters also displayed a tendency to connect any noise occurring to spiritual agency. Noting this, I could not help reflecting with what ease one could deceive them. It also gave me an idea that the average medium had pretty smooth sailing when he had none but spiritualists in his circle. If he could not readily offer an explanation for anything occurring, some one of the sitters would do it for him, thus educating him in the business.

When nine o'clock had struck and I came from the cabinet, you may rest assured I felt strange. I was sure that every time one of the sitters looked upon my face they not only knew that I had made the raps, but had lied about it afterwards. A dozen times I was on the point of *peaching* on myself, but as many times did a sense of shame overcome my resolution and I told myself that I would

tell them one at a time, as I met them, laugh it down and dismiss any further sittings.

The sitters were so delighted, and offered so many unselfish congratulations and encouragements, shaking my hand and patting me on the back, it is no wonder that I felt my smallness. One of the ladies remarked:

“There! I am sure none of us need ever have any doubts regarding physical manifestations after this. I am sure Mr. ——— would be guilty of no act of deceit.”

Think of it, reader. A respected lady friend offering such an expression of perfect confidence in me regarding the very thing in which I had just been deceiving her! Would you have felt perfectly at ease in my place? I think not.

I was glad when the sitters had departed, and thought long and deeply on my deception, and concluded not to say a word to any of them about it, but just shut down on any more séances. My wits were at work the entire time that elapsed between the regular sitting nights trying to concoct some plausible reason why I discontinued the development course.

The evening came, however, and no excuse that I could offer without exciting the suspicion that the manifestations of the previous sittings were a fraud, had been formulated. After the sitting



had gotten under way, the requests by the sitters for phenomena were so frequent and entreating that my conscience smote me again and again for my previous deception. However, I soon found myself rapping again. This time I essayed answers to the questions regarding the progress made in the medium's development, rapping an affirmative answer to the questions, "Is the development proceeding satisfactorily, and will he develop good physical powers?"

Nothing but raps occurred at this sitting, and the sitters were much pleased that the raps had been made to answer their questions. This was looked upon as a decided improvement over the preceding sitting. I was not so much abashed at their compliments and encouragements as on the previous occasion, and during the following week I actually found myself wondering what new thing I could do that would create more interest and enthusiasm than the raps. The only thing I could think of was to produce "spirit lights." This I tried with match-heads. It was successful and the sitters were delighted.

The lights and raps were all that were produced for some dozen or more sittings, for the reason that I could think of nothing more wonderful. One evening I went to sleep in my cabinet, and upon waking found that I was supposed by the

sitters to be entranced. It struck me as the proper thing to allow them to remain undeceived, which I did. The sitters took this for a sign that some new phenomena was about to occur. It did not, however, until one evening I found about twenty feet of rope that had been concealed in the cabinet without my knowledge. I found it nicely coiled and tied with thread to the underside of the cane chair seat in which I sat. I had no knowledge of rope tying feats, but undertook to bind myself with the ropes, and this I finally succeeded in doing. I then essayed my first speaking under control by exclaiming, "Look, look, look," until the sitters understood that the spirits wanted them to examine the medium's condition.

The sitters were delighted beyond measure at finding me apparently so securely bound. The light was so dim that it was impossible to detect anything wrong with the knots or manner of tying. I was fearful, though, all through the examination that some of them would discover my deception, and only breathed freely when the examination had been completed and I was admitted to be "most securely bound, and in a way that it was impossible to have accomplished himself."

I realized, however, that the absolute confidence of the sitters in my honesty had as much to do with the successful termination of my rope tying

test as anything else, and that with a "circle" of skeptics, it would have been an entirely different matter.

Little did I think at this time that at one day in the future I would have the reputation, deservedly too, of being the best and most satisfactory phenomenal medium in the United States. Little did I suspect that I would be able not only to duplicate the performances of the most skilled mediums, but improve them and be the means of converting hundreds to a belief in the phenomena of modern spiritualism. Such, however, are the facts in the case.

## APPENDIX II

EVA C.

WE have purposely avoided, in our present work, a discussion of the true value of the manifestations of the great mediums. Our work is, rather, a psychological study than a criticism of the true value of the proofs adduced by different writers as "Spiritistic Phenomena." But the "materializing medium" Eva C. has acquired such great notoriety through the voluminous book of Baron von Schrenck-Notzing, "Phenomena of Materialization," that our work would seem incomplete if we did not say a word about her. We prefer to quote verbatim the authorized opinions of other writers, rather than to express our own:

"There has just been issued an English translation by Mr. Fournier d'Albe, of the German work of Baron von Schrenck-Notzing, *Materialisations-Phanomene* (1914), which contains between two and three hundred excellent photographs of materialisations with this medium.

Mlle. Beraud is the daughter of a French officer. In 1903 she lived with the family of General Noel in Algiers, and was engaged to the General's son. The son died, and Marthe consoled the mother by discovering mediumistic powers. In 1905 Professor Richet was invited to study her materialisations, and he endorsed them. The "Annals of Psychic Science" then, in 1905 and 1906, drew the attention of the world to her wonderful gifts, but in the meantime an Algiers lawyer, M. Marsault, had fully exposed the trickery that was employed and had wrung a confession from Marthe herself. His report may be read in an article which appeared in the "Proceedings of the S. P. R." in July, 1914. Professor Richet and the Spiritualists evaded the force of this exposure, but Marthe Beraud left Algiers and began to work in Paris. There a fairly wealthy woman, Mme. Bisson, adopted her; and it is in Mme. Bisson's house that most of the sittings described in Schrenck-Notzing's book occurred. In her earlier phase, she had been known as "Marthe B." Mme. Bisson christened her "Rose Dupont." Baron von Schrenck-Notzing gives her the name of "Eva C." As he gives in the introduction to his book a very frank account of her character, perhaps he is justified; but it is acknowledged, though it was long suppressed, that she is the Marthe Beraud of the "Villa Carmen Phenomena" in Algiers.

When Baron von Schrenck-Notzing's book

appeared in 1914, and Mme. Bisson brought out in French a much shorter and more discreet version, a German lady-doctor, Mathilde von Kemnitz, published a drastic and annihilating criticism of it (*Moderne Mediumforschung*, 1914). I need not repeat the criticisms here, but the reader will quite fail to understand modern Spiritualism unless certain details of a rather delicate character are given. . . .

Baron von Schrenck-Notzing claims to have carried these precautions to the most rigorous conceivable point. Marthe was stripped before each sitting by Mme. Bisson, and sewn into the tight-fitting garments. . . . In any case, it is certain, and is admitted by the Baron, that, in spite of all his search, she smuggled articles into the cabinet. In some photos he admits that Marthe is the ghost, with fine drapery about her. In most of the others the ghost is quite obviously a paper-picture, pinned on the curtains. There is a strong reason to believe that she swallowed her material in advance, and was able to bring it up from her stomach. Many such cases are known in science.

Here the reader has the last word in mediumship of the physical type. The medium is pitted against men of science, and wins. At least Marthe Beraud is considered by Spiritualists, and by some men of the scientific psychic school, to have won. She has recently been in London, and the leading London Spiritualists greeted her with admiring enthusiasm."



(For further details, see: "Spiritualism, A Popular History from 1847," by Joseph McCabe. Dodd Mead & Co., N. Y., 1920.)

We take the following account from the "Fortnightly Review," July 18, 1920:

"Spiritism and the Scientists.

Messrs. Kegan Paul, we see from the London *Times Literary Supplement*, have in press an English translation of Baron Dr. von Schrenck-Notzing's sensational work, *Materialisations-Phanomene: ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der mediumistischen Teleplastik* (Munich, Ernst Reinhardt, 1914), which has been on our table for several months and has puzzled us not a little. The book embodies the results of certain scientific experiments carried out by the author, who is a practicing physician and a scientist of considerable renown, assisted by other physicians and scientists, with two mediums—the one a French woman and the other a Polish girl, partly in Paris and partly at Munich, shortly before the war. There are numerous photographs showing "teleplastic structures" in various stages of development. The English translation is by Dr. E. E. Fournier d'Albe and will be published under the title, "The Phenomena of Materialization: A Contribution to the Investigation of Mediumistic Phenomena."

Dr. von Schrenck-Notzing is the first scientist who has undertaken to ascertain whether

the "ghosts" that materialize at Spiritistic séances actually exist and of what substance they are made.

The first and main series of experiments were made with a French girl, "Eva C.," whom Dr. von Schrenck-Notzing describes as having moral sentiments "only in the egocentric sense," as not a virgin, and as having "a very erotic imagination." She had interested M. Bisson, a well-known French writer of some reputation, and especially his wife, Mme. Bisson, in her performances. Mme. Bisson became Eva's patroness and attended most of the séances. Dr. von Schrenck-Notzing took the phenomena very seriously, devised most of the rigorous control of the medium, raised the lights to a high pitch of illumination, fired five cameras at a time at the "ghost," and even installed a cinematograph. The young woman was stripped before every performance and sewn into something like "tights" of black cloth. Her mouth, nostrils, ears and armpits were carefully examined. There was a superficial examination also of the lower part of her body. After three years of research under these rigorous conditions, Dr. von Schrenck-Notzing published the results in his above-mentioned book. He was convinced that the phenomena were real, but offered no explanation of the manner in which they were produced. He disdains Spiritism and claims only a mysterious teleplastic power on the part of the medium. The special value of his book

lies in the 150 photographs of "materializations" which it contains. You see the "ectoplasm," as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle calls it, pouring from the medium's nose, eyes, ears and skin. You see spirit hands reaching out and mysterious faces and figures hovering in the air, etc.

Quite naturally, the book has given rise to a lively controversy, which will now be transplanted to English-speaking countries. It is asserted (see, *e.g.* Mr. Joseph McCabe's paper, "Scientific Men and Spiritualism: a Skeptic's Analysis" in the *English Review*, reproduced in the *Living Age*, of Boston, No. 3962, pp. 652 sqq.), that Eva C. is identical with Marthe Beraud, who was unmasked by Prof. Richet in 1905 and 1906 in the famous "Villa Carmen manifestations," and who confessed to M. Marsault that "it was all humbug." The "ectoplasm" is said to be bits of chiffon or muslin, white gloves, possibly inflated fish bladders, and other compressible and expansible articles hanging from the medium's mouth or fastened to her hair, clothing, or breasts, or to the curtain behind which she sits. The trance (Eva was hypnotized before every session) is said to be a sham. Attention is called to the fact that whenever a real "ghost" is visible, Eva's hands or feet are not to be seen. When human forms appeared, the curtain was kept closed until the girl was ready, music was supplied at her request (to drown the noise of her movements),

and she had a quarter of an hour or so to arrange the marvelous "peep-show." The faces appearing on the photographs are explained as illustrations cut out of the French papers; they are very crude and resemble flat paper surfaces. Baron von Schrenck-Notzing admits that on several occasions Eva deceptively smuggled pins into the cabinet in spite of his rigid control. Critics of his book point out that one or two of the photographs plainly show the marks of pins and that on one, which was taken prematurely, Eva is dangling the "ghost" on the end of a string. Another doctor pointed out that there are human "ruminants" who can lower things into their gullet or stomach and bring them up at will, and he remembered that Eva occasionally bled from the mouth or gullet after a sitting. For seven sittings (four of which were quite barren), a net was put over her head, but she stipulated that her dress be left open when the net was on, and very soon forced them to lay it aside.

In short, says Mr. McCabe, "although Baron Schrenck, Professor Richet, Doctor Geley, and other scientific and medical men cling to the "abnormal" theory, the whole three years' investigation really turned into a farce. It was admitted that 'Eva C.' was Marthe Beraud; and it is clear that she concealed her light and compressible material about her body." He adds that it has not yet been demonstrated that some women mediums may not develop an abnormal

secretion of mucus and blow or trail it from the mouth, making it assume fantastic appearances in the red light."

For Americans, the authority of Mr. Houdini, the great magician, cannot be denied as he is a master in the "art of deception." On Wednesday, July 5, 1922, he writes, to the Editor of the "New York Times":

*"To the Editor of the New York Times:*

Have read the letter of H. Edwards-Ficken and believe it calls for an explanation on my part. I did not expose Mlle. Eva, the protégée of Mme. Bisson, and had given my promise not to do so to the Hon. Everard Fielding during the eight séances at the rooms of the Psychic Research Committee in London, at which I was his guest.

I gave him my word that nothing would be published by me until after the Psychic Research Committee had published its proceedings regarding its séances. They were published about a month ago, which released me from my promise, and I can now give my views publicly. I feel that it is necessary to explain that I did not expose Mlle. Eva in London.

In the majority of these séances I was one of the committee to examine and hold Mlle. Eva in the cabinet. Each séance lasted three hours, so I had ample opportunity in the twenty-four hours, which were spread over a period of at

least one month, to carefully note what the medium was trying to do.

She positively did not do anything that would cause me to believe she was doing something which was not produced by natural means.

Have made minute detailed notes of the hundred séances which I attended and participated in on my last trip abroad, and although those present saw and heard extraordinary things, I was not convinced.

Am afraid that the greater part of the things we read about in full-page articles are very much like Sabonee's materialization, which is now being so vigorously denied. At the time it appeared I knew it was not possible, and having gone carefully through Schrenck-Notzing's book, all I can say is that to my belief it could not have happened in the minds of some who were there, or their confidences have been betrayed."



## APPENDIX III

### ECTOPLASM

TO the ordinary reader who is unacquainted with the voluminous work of Baron von Schrenck-Notzing, "our pictures" published in this book, would be difficult to understand, as some are but "an actual reproduction made by us" of the notorious materializations of his protégée, Eva C. The reader, therefore, is entitled to some explanation.

In the frontispiece the author is shown having in his right hand "a false finger," a comb in his left, and on the table an innocent-looking handkerchief, all "tools" of the trade. That Eva C. used "two combs" can be easily seen in Baron von Schrenck-Notzing's book, from which we are quoting (published in London and New York by E. P. Dutton & Co., 1920), p. 91, fig. 29. On pages 128-133 can easily be seen one of the big combs, figs. 52, 4, 5, and 6. That she uses "a hollow finger" may be seen in figs. 147, 148, 152, 153, 154. That she uses handkerchiefs can be easily seen in several places. I mention only Fig. 109,

where she was caught by the camera *holding* the "spook with her right hand, while to confuse in the dark the observations of von Notzing, she put a piece of cloth on her right knee, simulating her right hand.

If we look at the picture facing page 108, we shall see nearly three feet of "ectoplasm" (gauze) drawn from the cross bar of *one* comb where it had been ingeniously concealed by the author. The comb is an ordinary article, not especially made for this "psychic" purpose. On the same picture the "finger" shows in exactly the same position as in Figs. 147 and 148 of Dr. von Notzing's book. Of course, the "ectoplasm" (or gauze) hanging to it was stowed away "inside of the finger, that was itself, easily concealed"; the rest of the "ectoplasm" (gauze) on the table was concealed in the handkerchief.

In another picture we see how the "ectoplasm" (gauze) and a picture concealed "inside of the finger" is used by the author to "produce" (fake) the materialization of a spook, precisely in the same way Eva C. does for the edification of Dr. von Notzing and his friends. (Facing page 24.)

But there is something very "striking" and remarkable in von Notzing's book that gives us another example of the truth of P. T. Barnum's famous saying. I refer the scientific reader to

page 209, Fig. 119, and page 212 of the same *deeply scientific* book. In Fig. 118, besides the "ectoplasm (?!)" protruding from her nose, we see around Eva C.'s head a kind of "halo"—a paper halo—on which we can *read* three printed lines of the newspaper from which the "ectoplasm" (?) was taken. But there is still more. In Fig. 119 we find out from what newspaper Eva C. cut the "ectoplasm" (?). We clearly read, printed on the ectoplasm, these letters: "MIROI" (Miroir). Let us quote von Notzing's own words on this wonderful phenomenon. He says, page 213:

"Of much greater interest is the result of the photograph taken with the camera inside the cabinet (fig. 119). Here the flat object which projects behind the medium's head towards the back, appears with four distinct parallel creases, which are also shown in the stereoscopic photograph. There is a narrow horizontal strip, also interrupted by creases, on which we can recognize the words 'le' (small type) 'Miro' (large type). That is evidently meant to be 'Le MIROIR.' We can just recognize the top of an 'I' following the 'O,' but the next word 'R' is covered. I CANNOT FORM ANY OPINION OF THIS CURIOUS RESULT." (Capitals mine.)

After reading this, we need not wonder as to what Mr. J. McCabe of England said in the de-

bate on Spiritualism between Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (who is a great believer in von Schrenck-Notzing and Eva C.) and himself, page 48:

“Now, even in Germany and Austria, Baron von Schrenck-Notzing is the laughing-stock of his medical colleagues.”

Nevertheless, there are many writers and lecturers who quote von Notzing “as an authority.” We do not affirm or deny the existence of “ectoplasm.” We simply affirm that Dr. von Notzing’s book does not prove anything except as it is further confirmation that Barnum was right when he said: “There is ONE born every minute.”

## APPENDIX IV

### SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS

**S**PIRIT photography is one of the great “proofs” (?) of the reality of our communications with the “discarnate souls.” So mediums—scientific mediums especially—are producing the most wonderful (?) spirit-photographs. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle not long ago published the pictures of “Fairies” taken in England and he contends that they are authentic (?!). We print only three of our spirit-photographs (fake, of course), taken under “test conditions,” one in Worcester, Massachusetts, the second in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the last in New York City.<sup>1</sup>

There were three different first-class photographers, who used their *own plates* and handled them all the time, in spite of which the large “ghostly hand of a spook” appeared vaguely in one when the plate was developed. In the next the face of the spook was clearly seen, surrounded by a cyclonic cloud of “ectoplasm” (?), and,

<sup>1</sup> See photographs facing pp. 54, 72 and 128.

finally, although the audience "could not see" the large arm and hand of the "astral body" of the author, who was "moving furniture," making "chairs dance" and "lifting tables," when the photographs were developed, the "astral arm and hand of the author's astral body" (?) appeared very clearly, as shown in the illustration. Of course all of it was fake, but the method used by the author is an "entirely new one," as he does not use double exposure but a very simple device of his own invention to impress the plates, "not handling them at all."



## APPENDIX V

### LEVITATION

THE "levitation" of a human body by "the hands of the spooks" was one of the famous stunts or phenomena performed by the famous medium, D. D. Home.

The author has "reproduced" this phenomenon in his lectures, "under test conditions."

We reprint here the account given by the "Springfield Republican" of the lecture during which levitation of the human body was demonstrated. Facing page 202 is an authentic photograph of the "stunt" as accomplished in Springfield.

Rev. C. M. de Heredia, S.J., of Holy Cross college, treated a packed audience of Springfield people to a demonstration of "spiritism" which might well vie with the best efforts of the most distinguished professional mediums, last night in the hall of the technical high school. He re-created practically all of the illusions of mediumism, including table tipping, levitations, and apparitions, so effectively that the audience was completely baffled. Regard for "respectable

professional magicians" restrained him from revealing how the things were done, but the people went away laughing at spiritism. Father de Heredia admitted it was all trickery.

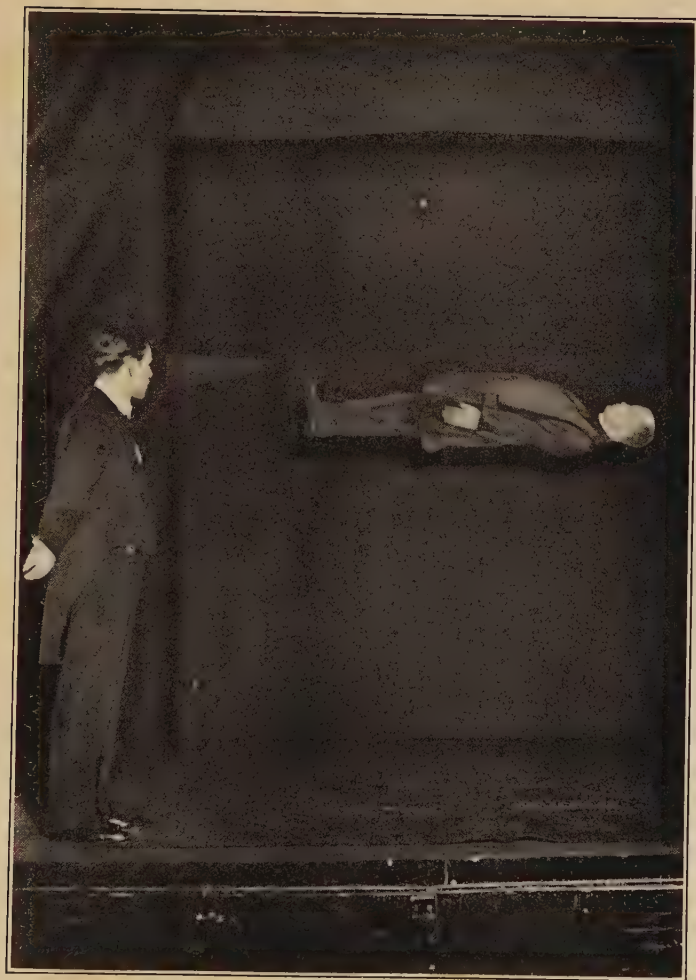
#### DESIRE TO EXPOSE FRAUDS

Motivating Father de Heredia's extraordinary performance was the desire to expose the frauds which he claimed are being perpetrated upon the public in the name of communion with departed souls. He admitted that there is such a thing as psychic phenomena but argued that it is quite another thing for a so-called medium, working for a consideration, to say arbitrarily that "this thing I show you is psychic phenomena" and to claim that the agency thereof is a departed soul.

"We Catholics," the father said, "have faith in immortality, in life after death. We believe that we will see our relatives again, but for the sake of decency and love we don't want to call our mothers back to the 'shimmy table.' " The latter was the lecturer's picturesque reference to the syncopated tipping of a table which formed part of his demonstration.

#### NEED A DARK PLACE

Prefacing his demonstrations with the remark that mediums need "a dark place in which to work" Father Heredia caused the lights to be extinguished and proceeded to reproduce his "astral body" or "nimbo," which appeared to be



"SPIRIT LEVITATION," PHOTOGRAPHED UNDER "TEST CONDITIONS" IN  
SPRINGFIELD, MASS.  
(SEE APPENDIX V)



a small phosphorescent glow against the solid black of the stage drop. He emerged from this experiment in a carefully simulated state of exhaustion, announcing that such an important detachment from one's body was liable to cause the best mediums some suffering. The next important illusion was a communication with the son of Sir Oliver Lodge by way of the table rapping route. After he had established relations with Raymond Lodge by means of a "controler," named Moonshine, on the "other side," he announced that he would have the same conversation with the young man which his father records in his book. The answers to Father de Heredia's questions were given by means of raps:—

"Hello, Raymond, are you there?"

"Yes."

"Do they have houses there?"

"Yes."

"Cigars?"

"Yes."

"And whisky?"

"Yes."

#### "SHIMMY" NOT UNKNOWN

Inasmuch as A. Conan Doyle says there are reference libraries in the land of the departed, Father de Heredia argued, it is reasonable to suppose that the "shimmy" is not unknown, and as a matter of proof the lecturer, by the use of his extraordinary power of communion, induced a "spirit" to instill certain motions into

the table, which might be understood as the well-known dance (with interpretative reservations).

Next in order of illusions (requiring a darkened house also) was the recalling of a few departed relatives who, in white ghost-like forms, eerily flitted about the stage. Then came a demonstration of the extraordinary psychic power of a simple bit of machinery consisting of a false hand resting upon a board. The hand moved three times in rendering a "yes" answer and one for "no" to questions put by members of the audience. After that, the lecturer worked himself up into a perfectly good trance and went among the audience telling different people things about themselves which were absolutely true and some say, he had no business knowing. One of these things was the location of a pin, supposed to be lost, which the father declared could be found in a particular corner of a particular drawer of a particular young woman's dresser. The young woman was particular about not revealing her identity.

#### INTERESTING DEMONSTRATION

A demonstration of unusual interest was the message reading which Father de Heredia performed, somewhat after the manner of Mrs. Isabel Bradley, who recently conducted services under the auspices of the First Spiritualistic Church in this city. One of the chief differences between the two, however, lies in the fact



that Father de Heredia did not seem at all concerned if any number of people touched the same ballot, whereas it is said that Mrs. Bradley considered that such multifarious handling was disconcerting to the "vibrations." With a huge "emerald" placed before his eye in the position of a telescope, Father de Heredia viewed at a stage-breadth a glass jar containing the written questions, carefully enveloped and sealed, of several members of the audience. He then proceeded to give the answers to the questions with an accuracy and completeness which should cause Mrs. Bradley considerable professional jealousy.

#### LEVITATES HIS BODY

Without question, the most remarkable of the illusions with which the priest amused the audience was the levitation of his body (with darkened stage). His body, barely distinguishable in the back-stage gloom, could be seen to rise, assume a horizontal position, rest there for an interval and gradually return to the floor (in an erect position). The services of two physicians were necessary to restore the demonstrator to a normal condition. At the conclusion of the performance Father de Heredia invited any member of the audience to come on the stage and examine it for evidences of apparatus. Several took advantage of the offer and reported that their investigations were fruitless.



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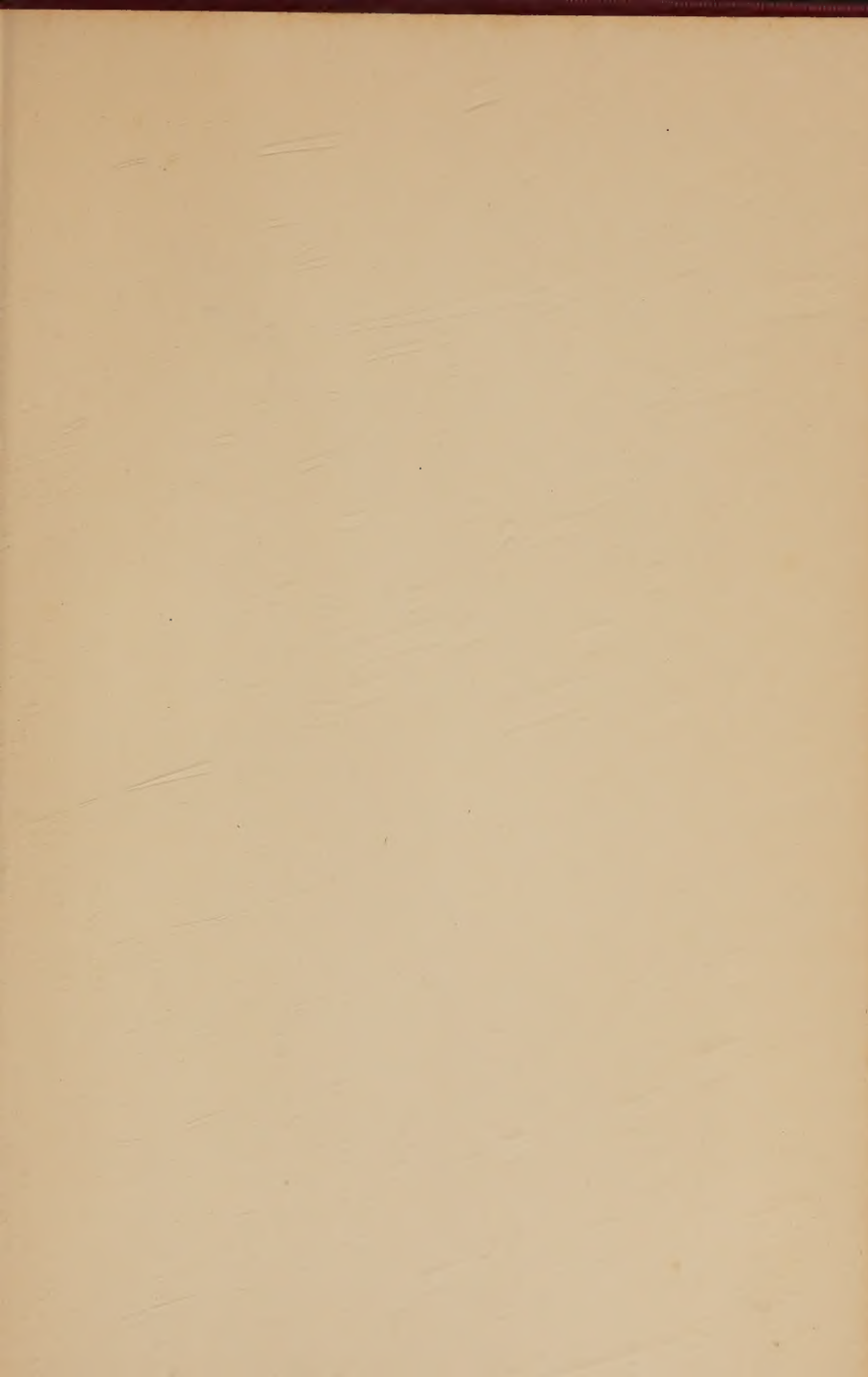
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